

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

DUNGEON MASTER™ **2nd** Edition Rules Supplement
Guide

Creative Campaigning



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Rules Supplement

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Credits

Designed by Tony Pryor (chapter 1),

Tony Herring (chapter 2),

Jonathan Tweet (chapters 3, 4, and 5), and

Norm Ritchie (chapters 6 and 7).

B&W Illustrations by Ken Frank.

Color Illustrations by Keith Parkinson, Larry

Elmore, Jeff Easley, John and Laura Lakey

Typography by Angelika Lokotz.

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Alternate Campaigns

The kingdom of Ulova is a land of pastoral beauty and shocking savagery. King Thuon rules from his castle in the bustling city of Stoneburg. His knights defend the land against raids by the goblins of the Treacherous Hills, while the Tanglebranch Forest harbors enclaves of wood elves and their deadly enemies, the gnolls. The Granite Mountains are home to the ancient kingdom of the dwarves, while far in the north, the Evil Dark Lord Sylthas threatens to bring all free peoples under his terrible yoke, with his hordes of undead warriors, orcs, goblins, evil sorcerers, and . . .

Sound familiar? With minor variations, the passage above could apply to thousands of different AD&D® campaigns. Set in a kind of medieval Europe writ large, it includes the typical castles, knights, sorcerers, elves, magical swords, orcs, dwarves, and generic evil dark lords that have become the staples of

fantasy fiction. Most are not true medieval states, but a historical hodge podge incorporating elements of the ancient, Renaissance, colonial, and even industrial ages in a free-wheeling mish-mash of ideas intended for entertainment more than accuracy.

Since *fantasy* is the operative word here, nothing is inherently wrong with a campaign like this. If the idea didn't work, there wouldn't be so many campaigns of this type. Medieval or even pseudo-medieval campaigns can be rich and rewarding, and provide players with endless adventure.

But occasionally, a DM or player wants something different. Why limit campaigns to the ordinary when there are so many possibilities? The ancient world did not consist solely of Europe; fantasy fiction is not limited to endless repetitions of simplistic good guy vs. bad guy clichés.



Many other game settings exist, a few of which are detailed in AD&D® products, such as far east adventuring in Kara Tur, nomadic cultures of the asian steppes in the Horde setting, and the exotic cultures of Central America in Maztica. In the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, the Gazetteer series provides guidelines for developing many non-European lands.

More territory awaits gamers in the settings of the polar regions, the Trojan War, the American Revolution, ancient Egypt, the stone age, and the African jungles. Player characters might be hired to assist the building of the pyramids, to deliver a message to Napoleon before he reaches Waterloo, or to accompany the Lewis and Clark expedition.

There is even more to fantasy than historical Earth. The worlds of fantasy fiction are exotic and unique, and all can provide ideas to the ambitious DM who wishes to expand his or her campaign beyond the realms of the ordinary.

This section of *Creative Campaigning* is intended to assist DMs in creating new and original campaign settings. Several major types of campaigns will be discussed, along with specific examples which may be used as described or as a guide for the DM to develop.

The Joys of Research

The suggestions in this section can only scratch the surface of the myriad alternative campaign styles. The information provided here should serve as a springboard for further investigation and research. Aspiring DMs are encouraged to investigate their local libraries and bookstores for more information on the historical eras, cultures, and peoples discussed below.

Campaigns in Historical Time Periods

Giuseppi knew something was wrong the moment he entered the alley. The cloaked figures appeared, silhouetted in the gaslight. Giuseppi redoubled his steps, only to find the other end of the alley blocked by two more figures—these with drawn rapiers. Giuseppi's heart raced as he realized he was trapped. Desperately, he turned back, only to find his other pursuers close behind.

"Giuseppi Cardillo!" said low, grim voice. One of the figures threw back his hood. "You have stolen something from the guild of magicians. Return it, and your death will be swift."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Giuseppi stammered. His enemy knew he was lying, but Giuseppi hoped he could buy some time. He fumbled beneath his cloak until his hand felt the reassuring sensation of metal and polished wood.

"Fool!" spat the enemy wizard, raising his hands to cast a spell. "Prepare to die!"

"No!" Giuseppi shouted, pulling twin pistols from his belt, cloak whirling. Without hesitation he fired, the flintlocks flashing with a roar like thunder in the cramped space of the alleyway.

The wizard tumbled backwards, astonishment on his face, and Giuseppi rushed away from his shocked pursuers, out of the alley, and into the busy street beyond.

Wait a minute. Pistols? Gaslight? What kind of AD&D® campaign is this? The answer, of course, is that it is a campaign set in an alternate time period from the typical middle or dark ages.

While some guidelines for setting your AD&D campaign in other time periods are given in the core rules books, most of the rules are geared toward the medieval period. This portion of *Creative Campaigning* is intended to expand upon the Dark Ages through Renaissance periods listed in chapter six of the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide*.

For each period discussed below, the following considerations are addressed:

Overview—a general description of the period and pertinent philosophy.

Basic rules modifications—adjustments to character classes; equipment based on technology; money; magic; and monsters appropriate to the setting.

Note that the campaign restrictions listed below are only suggestions. If they do not conform to your own view of the period described, change them to suit your needs.

Remember that the brief overviews given can provide only the barest glimpses of these rich historical periods. As stated earlier, much more wonder and color can be created by researching these periods at your local library.

The Bronze Age

Overview: The age of ancient Babylon, Persia, and Greece is a period of legendary heroism, deadly monsters, and powerful gods.

The world is divided into small kingdoms or city-states. Many early social systems such as monarchy, democracy, and oligarchy are developing. The people are often suspicious of strangers, and warfare between the infant kingdoms is frequent.

Not only do the gods truly exist as living entities in the minds of the people, but they walk the land, often in the company of monsters or legendary heroes. In this era, heroes could outwit or outfight the gods and win. Gods take sides in human conflict, sending good fortune to their chosen champions and catastrophe to those who are out of favor.

Omens and prophecies carry particular potency in bronze age life. Soothsayers and oracles are highly respected, and even the most obscure prediction is seen as a message from the gods and treated with deadly seriousness.

The bronze age is, above all else, an age of

heroes, when 300 brave warriors could hold off the gathered forces of an entire empire (as did King Leonidas and his Spartans at the pass of Thermopylae), or a lone band of adventurers could topple kingdoms and change the course of history, as did Perseus, Odysseus, and Jason. It is an era, therefore, well suited to AD&D® game adventures.

Class restrictions: The following classes are restricted:

Fighter: Rangers do not exist.

Wizard: Magic is a young science. Spellcasting is slower; all time units are increased by one unit (i.e., a spell that takes one segment to cast now takes one round, a spell requiring one round now takes a turn, and so on). Illusionists and diviners are the only specialist mages allowed. Spells of levels seven, eight, and nine do not exist.

Clerics: Priests and druids are allowed, and can be very powerful. However, they derive their spells from gods who are notoriously fickle. Each time a clerical spell is cast, there is a percentage chance equal to the spell level that it will not work because the god is otherwise occupied, upset, asleep, etc. This percentage is cumulative each day; if a cleric has cast three first level spells (1% each=3%), two fourth (4% each=8%), and a sixth (6%), then attempts to cast a fifth level spell (5%), there is a 22% chance that the spell will fail. This accumulation never exceeds 95%.

If the result of a roll is 01 (except on a 1st level spell), then the cleric has offended the god in some fashion and suffers a catastrophe, resulting in the spell backfiring, or having an alternate or opposite effect. Once a cleric's spell has failed, he or she may not cast any more spells for the rest of the day.

Rogues: Locks, as we know them, do not exist in the classical world. The lockpicking ability is therefore eliminated.

Otherwise, thieves and bards function normally. Bards take on an important role in classical society, telling tales of ancient bravery

and inspiring the general populace, as Homer did in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

Weapons and Equipment: Table 23: *Equipment by Time Period* in chapter six of the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide* references weapons and armor available for specific time periods. Use the "Ancient" column to determine an item's availability in the Bronze Age. Refer to the entry *Equipment by Time Period (The Ancient World)* for more details on bronze equipment and other combat modifications.

At the DM's option, mythical or legendary items such as the bow of Odysseus, the shield of Perseus, or Cupid's arrows may be allowed.

Monetary System: Barter is the rule over most of the world, but many sophisticated cities have invented currency. This takes a variety of forms, from the familiar gold coins to bars, rods, ingots and other, more unwieldy shapes.

Spells: Wizard spells of seventh level and higher are not available, except under unusual circumstances (such as a boon from a god or extensive research). Such spells are normally reserved for the gods. If the DM uses the spell component rules, he may wish to evaluate the availability of components based on technology.

Monsters: While most AD&D® game monsters exist in the bronze age, the familiar creatures of ancient legend are particularly suitable. Those associated with sylvan settings are especially appropriate, as are other creatures of mythic origins as follows: dragon, cyclops, gorgon, hippocampus, hippogriff, hydra, lammasu, medusa, merman, naga, nereid, nixie, nymph, rakshasa, sea lion, sphinx, titan, wyvern.

Humanoids and demihumans exist in the bronze age, but often in the form of legends,



or in brief appearances at the fringes of human territory. Humans are a young race, and other races such as elves and dwarves treat them with fear, suspicion, and often contempt. Orcs, goblins, and the like are rarely powerful or sufficiently organized to threaten human lands, and are usually occupied fighting each other.

Alternately, nonhumans may have formed powerful nations or city-states of similar or greater development than humans. These nations may or may not welcome the presence of humans on the world stage, and conflict is always possible. The idea of an ancient Greek-era human city-state defending itself against bronze-age elves or orcs is an intriguing image, possibly worthy of further development as a campaign.

The Iron Age

Overview: The founding of Rome, the glorious days of empire, the terror of the barbarian migrations, and the rise of Byzantium are all features of this active and exciting historical period.

The iron age sees the birth of true empires and the growth of trade to encompass entire hemispheres. Great nation states grow and vie for dominance, fighting furious wars to the death where their spheres of influence cross.

Science and magic grow in prominence. Great engineering feats, such as the construction of great walled cities and the spanning of mighty rivers take place. In large cities, such wonders as street lighting, indoor plumbing, and aqueducts help improve the quality of life.

The gods walk the earth less frequently as religion becomes more institutionalized. Priests wield great influence and have an important say in matters of national importance.

Social classes develop, with rulers and

nobles on the top rungs revelling in unbelievable luxury, and the poor and slaves at the bottom, lucky to survive each day.

Often, the decadence of the upper classes causes these folk to lose sight of the real world. Elaborate entertainments become more important than the day-to-day functions of government, allowing social conditions to worsen and wars to be fought for the most frivolous of reasons.

In such situations, plotting and intrigue are rife. Emperors are elevated, assassinated, and replaced in a matter of months. The army nominates its own leaders to throw out corrupt rulers, only to find that their own candidates soon fall prey to the same vices.

There is opportunity aplenty for brave player characters in such a world. Exploration of new trade routes, military campaigns, and diplomatic missions all demand the services of experienced adventurers. Familiar fabulous treasures and artifacts exist in the iron age, guarded by familiar fierce monsters.

Class restrictions: Character classes exist and function normally in the iron age, with the exception of the rogue class. Locks are still very rare; thus, rogues may place only 5 percentage points into the lockpicking ability per level, and may never raise it above 30 percent.

Weapons and Equipment: *Table 23: Equipment by Time Period* in chapter six of the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide* references weapons and armor available for specific time periods. Use the "Ancient" column to determine an item's availability in the Bronze Age. Refer to the entry *Equipment by Time Period (The Ancient World)* for more details on bronze equipment and other combat modifications.

Spells: Magic flowers in the iron age; spellcasters function without restrictions.

Monsters: The mythical monsters listed in the Bronze Age section are also appropriate to Iron Age campaigning. As the frontiers of the known world have expanded consider-

ably, other, nonmythological creatures will be more common. Iron Age adventurers may encounter creatures from Indian or Chinese mythology, or familiar *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™* beasts.

Nonhuman groups exist in wilderness areas, or may have created their own states that can be developed as allies, rivals, or outright enemies of human empires. Below ground, of course, many civilizations may exist and thrive.

The Renaissance

Overview: The Renaissance (ca. 1400-1600) is an especially rich period for adventure gaming. Although the period is slightly more modern than the typical AD&D® campaign, there are no restrictions to classes or magic.

Despite the enlightenment (or "rebirth") suggested by the term Renaissance, the period is a dark one in many ways. While science, literature, and the arts flourish in the Italian peninsula, bitter wars, both civil and religious, rage across Europe; political repression of all types victimizes entire nations; and the superstitions of the dark ages hold on grimly, even under the harsh light of modern logic and rationality.

As the Renaissance is gaining momentum in Italy, the bloody Wars of the Roses rage in England. Italy sees its share of religious wars, Papal successions, and the vicious decadence of ruling nobles causing widespread suffering.

All the same, during this period, reason and science make steady gains. Gunpowder revolutionizes warfare. Great works of art are created, and many universities and other centers of learning are founded. Science continues to make inroads against superstition. The middle class—merchants, craftsmen, and artists—develops, and many new experiments in social and political freedoms arise to

challenge the unquestioned authority of governments and churches.

Weapons and Equipment: All equipment is readily available in this period, with some notable additions.

Gunpowder weapons enter widespread use during the Renaissance, requiring more detailed rules for game use. The weapons below are listed in the order of their development, and may or may not be used depending on the slant of the campaign. All are muzzle-loading weapons; breech-loaders are well beyond the scope of this period.

Handgonne (early 1400's): This unwieldy weapon is both inaccurate and dangerous. Handgonnes take a full turn to load, require a burning match or cord to light, and incur a-3 penalty to THAC0 rolls.

On a THAC0 roll of 1 or 2, the handgonne has misfired, and the firer suffers 1d8 points of damage. The handgonne is also fouled, and takes 30 minutes to clear. If the gonne is fouled, roll 1d10. On a roll of 1, the gonne is permanently fouled or the barrel is damaged, rendering it useless permanently.

Damage for a handgonne is rolled on 1d10. If a 10 is rolled, the die is rolled again, and this amount is added to 10. Unlike the arquebus (see below), a handgonne can hit for a maximum of 30 points of damage. This damage is never modified by Strength.

Matchlock weapons (ca. 1400-1600): Matchlock guns require users to touch a burning fuse (attached to an s-shaped trigger mechanism) to a gunpowder pan in order to fire, increasing both accuracy and reliability.

Arquebus: This weapon, slightly more advanced and reliable than the handgonne, is fully described in Chapter 6 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Matchlock musket: This heavier and more reliable version of the arquebus uses similar firing rules, with some exceptions. A matchlock musket requires the same equipment for firing as an arquebus, but misfires

only on a roll of 1. If it misfires, the gun is fouled and takes 10-40 minutes to clear.

Damage for a matchlock musket is rolled on 1d12. Damage is cumulative in a manner similar to the arquebus; if a natural 8, 10, or 12 is rolled for damage, roll again, adding another 1-12 points. Another 1d12 is added each time a natural 8, 10, or 12 is rolled.

Matchlock pistol: Cavalrymen, sailors, and others who cannot afford to be encumbered by a clumsy rifle often carry a brace (or pair) of pistols at their belts.

Matchlock pistols have the same chance of malfunction as muskets. Like muskets and arquebuses, pistol damage is cumulative. Damage is rolled on 1d8; on a roll of 8, roll again. Add the second die roll to 8, and continue adding each time an 8 is rolled.

Flintlock weapons: The next level in weapon technology is the flintlock. This trigger mechanism causes a small piece of flint to strike against a piece of steel, creating sparks and igniting the priming powder. This makes gunpowder weapons much easier to use. Flintlock weapons are not common until the late 1600s.

Flintlock musket (ca. 1500-1800): This weapon misfires only on a roll of 1. A fouled musket can be cleared in 3d6 minutes.

Flintlock muskets cause 1d12 points of damage, with additional dice rolled whenever an 8, 10, or 12 is rolled.

Flintlock pistol (ca. 1500-1800): Pistols misfire in the same fashion as muskets. A flintlock pistol inflicts 1d8 points of damage, with an additional die rolled on every roll of 8.

Table 1 summarizes statistics for firearms.

Monsters: Wild animals and monsters still linger in unexplored regions, but in civilized areas, they have all but vanished. In order to survive as organized civilizations, kingdoms of nonhumans must be at a technological level similar to human states. A nation of swashbuckling, pistol-wielding orcs is not beyond the realm of possibility!

The Cavalier Era

Overview: Between the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the modern era (ca. 1600+) is a period known, among other things, as the Cavalier period. This era is recognized for widespread exploration of the world, expansion of trade to cover entire hemispheres and beyond, continent-wide military campaigns, siege warfare, and further developments in science, art, architecture, and literature.

This period is best known to the average gamer as the period of the English Civil War, *The Three Musketeers*, *Captain Blood*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. These names tend to conjure up images of swashbuckling adventure and deadly peril.

The power of artillery and massed firearms all but eliminate muscle-driven missile weapons. While never totally disappearing, body armor fades from widespread use.

In this age, reason and science grow more firmly entrenched, while magic and superstition lose favor, often being condemned as "tools of the devil." Religious wars and persecution continue in this period, often devastating entire countries.

As science marches on, technology expands, and the world moves closer to the modern era, the limits of the AD&D® rules begin to be stretched. The Cavalier period is probably the latest period in which an AD&D game can be run without extensive rules revisions.

Class restrictions: All classes exist in the Cavalier era, although local prejudice may restrict spellcasters and keep them underground. Clerics of "heretical" (i.e., foreign) religions can rarely practice their faiths openly, and risk trial and execution if they use clerical magic.

Weapons and Equipment: All equipment is available, including the gunpowder weapons described earlier.

TABLE 1: Firearm Summary

Weapon	Cost	Weight	Size	Type	Speed	Damage	ROF	S	M	I
Arquebus ¹	500 gp	10 lbs.	M	P	15	1d10/1d10	1/3	5	15	21
Musket, Mlch ²	1,000 gp	10 lbs.	M	P	10	1d10/1d10	1/2	5	15	21
Pistol, Mlch ²	750 gp	5 lbs.	S	P	7	1d8	1/2	2	4	6
Musket, Flint ³	1,500 gp	10 lbs.	M	P	8	1d10	1/2	8	16	24
Pistol, Flint ³	1,000 gp	5 lbs.	S	P	6	1d8	1/2	2	4	6

¹ Backfire on 1-2, 1d6 damage; clear 30 rounds

² Backfire on 1, 50% chance of 1d6 damage; clear 30 rounds

³ Misfire on 1, 10% chance of 1d6 damage; clear 30 rounds

* 2/3 ROF indicates that a flintlock must skip every third round in order to simulate reload time

Monetary Systems: Currency is in widespread use, although barter and trade still exist in rural or less-developed areas.

Monsters: Most of the PCs' opponents will probably be humans or demihumans. With the advance of widespread civilization, the most dangerous monster species will have been hunted to extinction or limited to wilderness areas. Organized bands of intelligent creatures such as orcs, elves, and dwarves will be rare or nonexistent, although modern kingdoms of such races are entirely possible.

The underdark may still harbor large numbers of monsters, although the inquisitive nature of scientific thought would probably demand the thorough exploration and development of any extensive subterranean regions.

Other Periods

The previous descriptions cover those periods most suitable to an AD&D® campaign. Other periods are possible, although they represent considerable effort for the DM, and may stretch the rules beyond reasonable adjustments.

Stone Age: Technology is nonexistent, and PCs must live in hunter-gatherer or primitive

agricultural bands. Life is a constant struggle for survival, including conflicts with rival tribes, predators, and the elements.

While the stone age may make for interesting short campaigns or one-shot adventures, it pales in the long run. Most character classes other than fighters (tribal warriors) and clerics (shamans) will not exist, and most character abilities and proficiencies will be nonexistent due to primitive conditions.

The Industrial and Modern Age: After the early 1700s, the world takes on the form with which we are familiar. Magic and the belief in fantastic creatures declines and all but vanishes. Dangerous creatures are eradicated from all but the most primitive areas. Global exploration leaves few unknown regions. Warfare progresses to a level in which entire continents can be devastated. New nations are born, and democracy becomes a viable and accepted form of government.

While an AD&D® game in this period could be interesting, the adaptation of a game designed around the pre-industrial eras could prove a greater task than even the most ambitious DM should attempt. In the end, an entirely new game system would probably result.

This is not to say that short-term campaigning in the modern world is not possible. See the *Other Campaigns* entry later in this section for details.

Moreover, our modern age, with its aircraft, computers, television, electricity, automobiles, automatic weapons, and so on is even more difficult to adapt to a continuing AD&D campaign. While transporting characters to New York for a single session or short series of adventures could be challenging and interesting, it is unsuitable for a long-term campaign.

Single Class Campaigns

Many AD&D® books and articles mention single-class campaigns, in which all player characters are of the same class, but few details have been discussed on running such a campaign. This section will provide ideas and rules for running a single-class game.

Why Single Class?

Why would anyone would want to run a campaign consisting of only a single class? There are several answers to this question.

First, it represents a challenge. An all-fighter group, without the usual wizardly or clerical backup, will be forced to find new and innovative ways to surmount obstacles. An all-wizard group will have to use magic rather than brute force to survive. Each class is forced to work within its own strengths and weaknesses.

Second, single-class campaigns allow for more specific types of adventures. Many adventures are geared toward a certain style of play (those adventures featuring large amounts of combat, exploration, or espionage, for example), and tend to leave out certain character classes (a fighter might be bored by all-espionage adventures, while thieves find themselves with little to do in

wilderness campaigns). Single-class campaigns allow the DM to craft adventures that are more likely to involve everyone.

Keeping It Balanced

Such a campaign is not without drawbacks. The usual cross-section of abilities found in the average adventuring party is sorely lacking in a single class campaign. A group of wizards will be weak against a powerful, magic-resistant opponent, while fighters will be at a loss against enchanted creatures that are all but invulnerable to nonmagical attacks. Clerics will have a hard time opening a double-locked and trapped chest. Such no-win situations must be avoided in single-class adventures, thus limiting the choices of antagonists and obstacles.

Single class campaigns are probably not suitable for long-term gaming, but they may work as parts of larger, ongoing campaigns. If, for example, the monks at a certain monastery in your campaign must discover who has been sabotaging their vineyards, have the players set aside their usual characters, roll up the abbot and his acolytes, and game out the investigation. If Castle Yomaro is besieged by an army of oni and wang-liang while the PCs are in the mountains looking for the lost saber of Wei-Hai, have the players take the roles of the castle's defenders.

Should this sort of adventure prove successful, it could result in a continuing single-class campaign, which could complement regular gaming sessions.

Single Class Adventure Ideas

Fighter: An all-fighter campaign is probably the easiest single-class game to manage. Since the AD&D® game has a strong orientation toward combat, fighters will never be at a loss for action. Gamers who love hack and slash can easily get their fill.



There are many valid rationales for all-fighter groups. They may be wandering bands of mercenaries, the personal guards of a king or queen ala *The Three Musketeers*, or members of a martial order pledged to defend good or avenge a terrible wrong, in the manner of the 47 Ronin from Japanese history.

All of these are strong possibilities for an all-fighter campaign; they are groups whose challenges are suited to the character class. On the other hand, enchanted creatures that can be harmed only by magic, such as aerial servants, elementals, golems, and creatures of the planes are probably a poor choice for an all-fighter group. This could be remedied by providing all the fighters with enchanted swords, but that can quickly degenerate into Monty Haul foolishness. A better solution is to avoid such creatures, or encounter them only rarely.

Adventure Ideas: The primary task of a fighter, as is obvious from the very name, is to fight. Military campaigns, combat-intense dungeon exploration, and guard missions all qualify in this regard. A long-term military campaign, in which the PCs' city or nation is threatened by an advancing army, can provide many exciting adventures. Characters may serve as guards for a long-distance trade or exploration mission, such as the travels of Marco Polo. Fighters may travel in a mercenary band, offering their services to the highest bidders in a war-torn land. Many other campaigns of similar type are possible.

This does not mean that all-fighter adventures need be exclusively hack-and-slash; such a style will soon lose its appeal. Fighters are as capable of rational thought, diplomacy, and research as any other character type. Warriors can serve as ambassadors in negotiations with hostile enemies; they can solve mysteries, explore, and engage in trade, as well as fight and lead armies. The style of play should be as flexible and eclectic as possible, and an all-fighter campaign can be long-

lived and enjoyable.

Paladin: In small numbers (four or five characters maximum), this specialized fighter is suitable for an all-fighter campaign. The paladin's potent abilities and solitary lifestyle make larger groups impractical. Short, single-player campaigns are also suitable for paladins.

A small group of paladins can be a challenging role-playing experience. When forces of chaotic evil war with civilization and freedom, paladins are on the front line. Paladins are at their best in desperate struggles against impossible odds, fighting evil necromancers or wizards, or standing against hordes of orcs or other wicked creatures. In short, paladins are well suited to the epic style of play, and DMs should not be afraid of allowing such characters to attempt impossible feats of bravery and daring.

A paladin may also participate in adventures for normal fighters, or as a member of a group of ordinary fighters. In this case, the paladin may serve as group chaplain or the voice of restraint, advising the other fighters against acts which might be considered evil or chaotic.

Ranger: Even more so than the paladin, the ranger is a loner. He operates in the wilderness, far from civilization, disdaining companionship and the noise of the city. Rangers band together in groups only rarely, such as when their forest is threatened or when a particularly powerful evil force appears. To this end, all-ranger groups are best suited to short campaigns. Such wilderness campaigns can involve trying to mislead or ambush an enemy, espionage, rescuing captives, or discovering the cause of a plant blight.

Wizard: Wizards start as one of the weakest character classes, but progress to become one of the most powerful. Both ends of the spectrum provide considerable role-playing opportunity.

Novice wizards may band together as a

study group, to share and enhance their understanding of magic, or simply for self-defense. Individually, each mage may be of limited power, but with proper planning, each can carry spells that complement his or her fellows.

Low-level wizards would do well to avoid heavy combat situations or to hire some muscle if the need arises. Single opponents or very small bands of monsters are the best challenge for a beginning group, and the DM should always allow the wizards an escape route of some kind. Players will not be happy if their wizards are trapped in a deadly combat and massacred by ogres as soon as their *magic missiles* run out.

Challenging adventures for low-level wizards may seem difficult, due to the overall weakness of the character class, but many possibilities exist. Such wizards might be involved in palace intrigue; they might be hired to search for a rare spell component or spellbook; or sent on a short quest by a local lord.

Higher-level wizards have many more possibilities. They may form a circle to conduct magical research, or as a response to rival wizards. These circles can be extremely potent, and may grow powerful enough to influence or control entire kingdoms. Such power will not remain unnoticed for long, and is likely to attract dangerous and exotic enemies.

High-level wizards may face dangerous and exciting enemies. Rival wizards, liches, evil warlords, and creatures of the planes are all excellent opponents for advanced wizards, capable of testing their considerable magical skills. High-level wizard adventures can range across a continent or world, and beyond to the planes. Extra-planar creatures and other powerful wizards will not like this, and might take steps to prevent the PC wizards' explorations.

Wizards of sufficient power can lead entire

kingdoms, field enormous armies, and change the power structure of entire continents. Like paladins, high-level wizards are well suited to epic scale adventures.

Mid- and high-level wizards are suited for greater adventuring possibilities than low-level ones; DMs who wish to attempt an all-wizard campaign might consider starting PC wizards out at fifth or sixth level in order to avoid the awkward experiences of low-level adventures.

Cleric: Often neglected and treated as little more than mobile first-aid stations, a cleric gaming group will offer this versatile character class unique challenges. The potent spell capabilities of low-level priests combined with their high hit point numbers and substantial combat abilities make the cleric a more potent character than might immediately be apparent.

Characters may be members of a monastery or religious order, or a band of adventurous clerics sent on a quest by their deity. The tenets of certain faiths may demand that they spend part of their time wandering the world, doing good and righting wrongs.

While all-cleric groups are a good choice for a campaign, the solitary nature of druidic worship makes adventuring with a group of these specialist priests less appropriate. Short sessions with a few druids are entirely possible, but their motivations leave them fewer possibilities for a meaningful campaign.

The DM who wishes to run an all-cleric campaign has a broad spectrum of adventures from which to choose. Clerics are often sent on quests as penance or in order to advance in level. Many temples are intimately involved in the political and military affairs of their city or region. Some faiths aggressively solicit converts. Lawful faiths may be involved in religious wars against the forces of chaos.

Clerics are versatile enough to be capable in situations involving both combat and magic,

although they lack the abilities of the thief class.

Opponents are not a problem for priests. Good clerics constantly battle the forces of the lower planes—baatezu, tanar’ri, and others, against which magic is particularly useful. Wizards, particularly powerful ones, may feel that clerics encroach on their territory and are potential rivals as spell-casters. Particularly successful temples may become annoying to local leaders or neighboring evil humanoids, and may have to defend their existence.

Thief: With their stealth skills and varied talents, thieves can provide the basis for a rewarding long-term campaign.

Thieves function best in an urban setting, where their trap-detection and lock-picking skills are most useful. Thieves may be members of the local thieves’ guild, given assignments by their guildmaster and rising through the ranks, or they may be freelancers, operating in a great urban area, continually avoiding the attention of the guild. Bands of thieves might operate in a city that has no guild, or might attempt to found their own guild.

Bard: This specialized rogue normally operates alone, but small groups of bards could function well in single-class campaigns. A single-player campaign is a good possibility for a bard, as is a campaign in which the PCs are members of a wandering theatrical troupe, entertaining the populace while engaging in freelance roguery and espionage.

Single Race Campaigns

The AD&D® gaming world is generally oriented toward humans. Although they lack the racial bonuses and abilities of other races, humans have no level restrictions and have the potential, in the long run, to grow far more powerful than elves, dwarves, gnomes, and so on.

There are alternatives to this approach, however. Certain races may have their own

realms; some may have entire worlds to themselves. In such cases, single-race campaigns are possible. The following section describes some single-race campaigns, providing suggestions and possible rationales, as well as suitable adventure types.

Dwarves: These sturdy humanoids are always popular as fighters, often supplying needed muscle in otherwise underpowered adventuring bands. Powerful, skilled, and dangerous, dwarves are well suited to a single-race campaign.

Dwarves cannot be wizards, but serve well in all variations of fighters, clerics, and thieves. This assortment gives a good cross section of abilities, and can make for an effective adventuring party.

All-dwarf campaigns might originate in the depths of the earth, where no humans have ventured. Such campaigns would involve most of the usual adventure activities—exploration, treasure hunting, warfare, and skull-duggery, but in setting completely underground. In such campaigns, interaction with humans is possible, but is likely to be rare.

Campaigns may be set in an all-dwarven continent, or in a world in which humans have not yet evolved.

Many, but not all, dwarf adventures can be combat-oriented. Battles against traditional enemies such as orcs and goblins, quests for legendary dwarven artifacts, and the extermination of troublesome subterranean monsters are just a few possibilities.

Dwarven rogues and clerics provide enough skills to allow for magical and espionage adventures as well as pure combat scenarios. Spying missions against neighboring orc kingdoms, exploration of trade routes, or the retrieval of a stolen treasure can provide well-rounded adventures.

Elves: In many works of fantasy literature, as well as AD&D® campaigns, elves are portrayed as an ancient and long-lived, even

immortal, race. Legends tell that the elves were created well before the rise of man, and once ruled vast, awesome civilizations. Since then, the legends say, elves have faded and decreased in both status and power.

An all-elf campaign could be set in such an era, or in a world in which humans are a minor race. As the elves in such a world would be at the height of their powers, the DM might consider the relaxation or outright elimination of elves' level restrictions.

All-elfen worlds are places of great magic and peril. Adventures may range from mundane to epic, and the actions of even low-level parties might have far-reaching consequences.

Battles against rival elven nations, wars with the minions of evil gods (such as orcs or goblins), the forging or retrieval of wondrous artifacts, quests against powerful monsters, and the creation of a secure elven homeland are all adventures suitable to elven worlds.

In a human-dominated world, an all-elf group could consist of the defenders of the last elven nation, or could be sent into the world to learn the ways of men. In these campaigns, elven level restrictions should be retained.

Elves in this sort of campaign can engage in exploration, guide elven refugees from encroaching civilization, help battle traditional enemies such as orcs and dragons, or making contact with hostile human nations, hoping to make peace or further mutual understanding.

Gnomes: Like dwarves, most gnomes dwell deep beneath the ground, in settings appropriate for single-race campaigning. While not as martially-oriented as dwarves, gnomes can participate in similar campaigns. Gnome illusionists should not be forgotten in such adventures.

Placing any group of adventurers out of its element can lead to dangerous and hilarious circumstances. A band of gnomes forced to foray across a dense forest will face numerous

enemies, but a clever group may enjoy the challenge. Due to war or an underground catastrophe, gnomes may be forced to live in cities or on the fringes of civilization. Gnomes may face assault or territory disputes with drow or kuo toa.

Halflings: Halfling society is often associated closely with humans, and traditional halflings are described as timid homebodies with little stomach for adventuring. This does not, however, preclude all-halfling campaigns.

Halfling settlements need not be pastoral villages populated by happy farmers living in gumdrop houses. The world beyond halflings' homes can be a dark and dangerous place. The threats of marauding humanoids, hostile monsters, and evil slavers may compel some villages to train their young citizens as warriors. Halflings' natural skill with bow and sling can make them formidable opponents.

The defenders of a halfling village can be of any suitable class—fighters, thieves, or clerics. Adventures in defense of halfling sovereignty can include exploration, scouting, diplomacy, trade, and espionage. Enemies might include local orc or goblin tribes, greedy human warlords, or troublesome wizards. The range of skills available to halflings makes for excellent adventuring parties.

Halflings may be part of a small community or enclave in a human, elven, or dwarven city. In this case, the halflings will probably stick together, defending themselves against unscrupulous merchants, slave traders, or the local thieves' guild whose bully-boys may consider the halflings easy marks. Alternatively, these halflings—highly skilled at thievery arts—may form their own guild or protective association, engaging in shady deals and freelance operations.

Humanoids: Orcs, goblins, kobolds, and other humanoid races can participate in many traditional adventure types, but from a decidedly different perspective.

Humanoids may battle rival tribes or traditional enemies such as dwarves, elves, humans (and just about everyone else). There is no reason why humanoid heroes can't go on quests for lost treasure or weapons, rescue their allies from foes' clutches, or set up trade routes with friendly nations.

A DM who is willing to invest some time may consider allowing humanoid player characters, gaining experience in a similar fashion to normal PCs. Humanoid characters will have modified abilities and class restrictions as described in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™*. Goblins, for example, can be fighters and shamans, but gain only 1-1 hit die per level. Players may need to stick to low-level adventuring, or expect to replace their characters on a regular basis.

A humanoid character of an atypical alignment (a lawful good orc, for example, lost as a

baby during a war and raised by humans) is likely to lead an interesting and busy career.

Alternate Lands and People

There is a vast world beyond the usual European or Asian settings where most campaigns take place. Following are some suggested settings for campaigns set in such areas. Of course, there are literally thousands of cultural milieus beyond Europe and the orient, and this product can touch on only a tiny fraction of them.

The following descriptions are not exact translations of the mythologies and cultures portrayed—rather, they are adaptations of a wide variety of legends combined into suitable AD&D® campaign settings. They can be used as a starting point for a campaign, or can inspire further investigation of other cultures.



Setting up such a campaign requires some work. A trip to the library is probably in order; huge quantities of source material that can form the basis of a nonmedieval campaign are available. Research and exploration of these subjects can provide rewards far beyond gaming enjoyment. Ambitious DMs are encouraged to use the resources available at the library. The *Legends & Lore* book can also provide the basis for alternative campaigns with its excellent background notes on various cultures such as Celtic, Egyptian, and Greek.

Celtic Ireland

Long ago, the Tuatha de Danaan, children of the goddess Dana, arrived in the place now known as Ireland and defeated the Firbolgs for possession of the land. Later, the de Danaan were locked in a deadly struggle with the Fomorians, an alliance of evil creatures.

Many scholars consider the Tuatha de Danaan to be analogous to the later Daoine Sidhe, or elves. This being the case, legendary Ireland would be a good setting for an all-elf campaign, set in the glory days of elven civilization, with level limits relaxed or eliminated altogether. The de Danaan might also be regarded as normal—if exceptionally beautiful and passionate—humans.

The de Danaan worship a wide variety of gods and goddesses. Many are the descendants of the original Tuatha de Danaan, now ascended to divine status. They include Lugh the Bright God, Oghma the Bountiful, Daghdha the Good, Morrighan the Battle Crow, and others (detailed in the *Legends and Lore* book).

Druids and bards are very important in Irish society. The priestly druids lead the land's religious life, issue prophecies, and aid in the defense of their kingdoms. Bards wander the countryside, singing songs of the heroic deeds they witnessed and bringing news of distant lands.

Factions: Ireland is divided among four kingdoms—Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connaught—which spend as much time fighting each other as they do battling the invading Fomorians. These nations are more accurately described as alliances of chieftains under the leadership of a high king, or *Ri Ruirach*.

The leading nation is Ulster, a kingdom served by the Knights of the Red Branch. This band of heroes is led by the hero Cu Chulainn, who carries the mighty spear *Gae Bolg* and the sword *Cruaidin Caladcheann*. Cu Chulainn once refused the love of the goddess Morrighan, and this terrible deity is now his sworn enemy.

Ulster's greatest rival nation is Connaught, under the leadership of Queen Maeve, who is famous for her great prowess in battle and her numerous lovers. While she is not evil, Maeve is extremely vain and vengeful, like most Irish monarchs of the day. Her kingdom is currently locked in a series of raids and small battles due to her desire to possess a prize brown bull owned by Ulster's king, Conchobar.

Conchobar is vain and petty, and will not allow his honor to be tainted, even if it means dragging his kingdom to destruction. The Red Branch warriors serve him, although several members of this order, including Cu Chulainn, have advised him to make peace with Maeve and face the Fomorian threat.

Enemies: Once defeated and driven out of Ireland by the de Danaans, the Fomorians have returned to raid and harass the land's new masters. The Fomorians are an alliance of numerous evil races—orcs, trolls, ogres, goblins, and some entirely unknown creatures—led by Balor One-Eye, a great armored cyclops whose single eye deals instant death to all whom meet its gaze.

These are dark days for the kingdoms of Ireland. The Fomorians, once thought vanquished, have returned in force, and may

threaten the Tuatha de Danaan's very existence. They have allied with the evil race of humans known as the Milesians and raid the Emerald Isles with greater and greater boldness.

Unfortunately, the vain rulers of the Irish kingdoms are blind to the threat that the Fomorians and Milesians represent, and seem more interested in warring on each other over petty or meaningless issues.

Realizing the danger, Cu Chulainn and his companions—Fionn MacCumhail, Cathbad the Druid, Conall Cernach, and others—have formed the *Fianna* or Warband of Ireland, a group of Irish chieftains, their warriors, druids, healers, and bards, all devoted to defending Ireland as a whole against outside threats. Several rulers see the *Fianna* as a threat to their own power, and are dedicated to its destruction.

Characters in a Celtic Irish campaign may be new members of the *Fianna*, dedicated to defending their homeland. Or, they may be subjects of one of the four great kingdoms, fighting for the glory of their chieftain, or *Ri Ruirich*.

Many treasures wait to be found throughout Ireland (see below). Ireland also holds many wild, unexplored regions, where forgotten gods, strange creatures, and even secret Fomorian strongholds may exist. Celtic Ireland, distinct and separate from traditional medieval settings, offers AD&D® game characters unlimited opportunities for adventure.

Monsters: Many fabulous monsters stalk the land, threatening the innocent. The following list cites *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™* creature suitable to a campaign set in Celtic Ireland. Those marked with an asterisk are likely to be found as members of the Fomorian alliance.

Badger, bat, bear, boar, brownie, bugbear*, catoblepas, great cats, centaur, chimera, dog, dragons, dryad, dwarf, eagle, elf, ettercap*,

ettin*, galeb duhr, ghost, ghou, giants*, giant-kin (all)*, gnoll*, gnome, goblin*, groaning spirit, hag, halfling, haunt, hawk, hobgoblin*, horse, kelpie, kobold, korred, leprechaun, leucrotta*, lich*, lycanthropes (especially werebears and boars), merman, mogrelman*, night hag*, nightmare*, nixie, nymph, ogre*, orc*, owl, owlbear, pixie, poltergeist, satyr, sea lion, selkie, skeleton, skunk, spectre, sprite, troll*, unicorn, vampire*, weasel, wight, will o'wisp, wolf, wolverine, wraith, wyvern.

Magical Items: The Tuatha de Danaan brought several treasures with them when they came to Ireland. The four most famous of these, known collectively as the Four Hallows of Ireland, are described below.

The Stone of Fal: This flat stone emits a piercing scream when a rightful king steps upon it. The de Danaan use it in cases of disputed succession and civil conflict.

The Spear of Lugh: This godly weapon functions as a *spear* +4 and inflicts double damage upon Fomorians.

The Sword of Nuada: This sword acts as a *sword* +5, *holy avenger*, but functions in the hands of any good-aligned fighter, rather than a paladin.

The Cauldron of Daghdha: This item is always full of nourishing food, regardless of location or circumstances.

Heroes: The following characters are NPC heroes likely to be encountered by characters in a Celtic Campaign.

Cu Chulainn

This hero is detailed in the *Legends and Lore* volume. The following entry expands on the previous statistics.

20th level Warrior

Str 18/00	Dex 17	Con 18
Int 17	Wis 15	Cha 17

AC-2; MV 15; hp 200; #AT 5/2; Dmg 1d6+4 (spear) +6 or 1d8+2 (broadsword) +6; MR 10%; AL CG; THAC0 1.

Cu Chulainn (Kuh-KOO-Linn), also called the Hound of Ulster, is the leading warrior of the Red Branch Knights. He has helped to form the Fianna to counter the threat of the Fomorians. His exploits are far too numerous to list here, but he is known across the length and breadth of Ireland, and even those who hate him (and there are many) cannot help but fear him as well. He fights with the enchanted sword, Gae Bolg, which functions as a *spear* +4. In combat, Cu Chulainn emits a blinding brilliance, causing any who gaze at him to fight at -4 to their attack rolls. Gae Bolg conveys a +4 bonus to attack and damage vs. giants.

Cu Chulainn also wields the sword Cruaidin Calidcheann, which functions as a *sword* +2, +4 vs. evil creatures.

Sworn enemy of both Morrighan (whose love he rejected) and Maeve of Connaught, Cu Chulainn is infamous for his deep melancholies and berserk rages, in which he can slay even his closest friends. At the end of each round that Cu Chulainn is in combat, a saving throw vs. death is rolled. If the saving throw fails, Cu Chulainn goes berserk, with the following effects: he gains an additional +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls; strength is effectively 19; he gains 10 temporary hit points. He immediately attacks the nearest enemy and continues fighting until all foes in sight are slain, or until he dies.

When no foes remain, another saving throw vs. death at a -2 penalty is rolled. If Cu Chulainn succeeds, his berserk rage ends, but if he fails, he continues to attack the nearest individuals, friend or foe. If no one is in sight or available for combat, he rages incoherently for 1d6 rounds, then falls, exhausted.

When the rage ends, 10 hit points are deducted from Cu Chulainn's total. If this produces a negative number, Cu Chulainn falls unconscious for an equal number of hours. When the time has elapsed, he is restored to 1 hp

If Cu Chulainn slays a friend or ally, roll vs. death (without penalty) again in order to end the berserk rage. The only other way that the rage can be ended is through a *limited wish*, *heal*, or similar spell.

Fionn MacCumhail

18th level Warrior/8th level Druid

Str 18/50 Dex 16 Con 17

Int 15 Wis 20 Cha 18

AC 5; MV 12; hp 160; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+3 (spear) +3; MR 20%; AL CG; THAC0 3.

Fionn MacCumhail is the leader of the Fianna. He is a cunning and resourceful hero. In his youth, he was educated by the druid Finegas. During this time, Fionn consumed part of *Fintan*, the Salmon of Knowledge, to gain superhuman wisdom. He is known the leading warrior in Ireland, second only to Cu Chulainn.

Fionn is accompanied by the Bran and Sceolan, hounds with human intelligence which some claim are actually his nephews, shapechanged by a curse. Treat these animals as dire wolves of neutral good alignment and high intelligence.

Fionn fights with a *spear* +3, and wears an enchanted *torque* +3, which provides him with armor class 2.

Cathbad the Druid

16th level Druid

Str 13 Dex 14 Con 15

Int 18 Wis 18 Cha 14

AC 5; MV 12; hp 75; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+2 (staff); MR 10%; AL N(G); THAC0 1.

The best known druid in Ireland, Cathbad prophesied the coming of Cu Chulainn, and is now a member of the Fianna.

Cathbad fights with a *staff of power* and wears an enchanted *torque of protection* +3, giving him the equivalent of AC 3.

Maeve of Connaught

15th level Warrior/10th level Druid

Str 17 Dex 15 Con 13

Int 16 Wis 16 Cha 18

AC 2; MV 12; hp 85; #AT 2; Dmg 1d8+2 (broadsword) +1; MR Nil; AL CN; THAC0 6.

Maeve is queen of Connaught, and one of the most implacable enemies of the kingdom of Ulster. Although her consort, Aihli, is theoretically her co-monarch, Maeve makes it abundantly clear that she is the real power in Connaught.

A skilled warrior and spellcaster, Maeve is also said to be able to bend men to her will, and to have many lovers. She covets the prize brown bull of Ulster in a feud typical of the pettiness of Irish monarchs. She has sent her warmaster, Fergus MacRoy, on several raids to capture the bull, but so far he has failed.

Maeve is not evil, but is prone to the same pridefulness as her fellow rulers. Her conflict with Ulster—and Cu Chulainn, whom she hates—has distracted her from the continuing threat of the Fomorians.

Balor One-Eye

20th level Warrior/10th level Wizard

Str 18/00 Dex 15 Con 19

Int 18 Wis 11 Cha 4

AC 0; MV 18; hp 125; #AT 2; Dmg 1d10+3 (two-handed sword) +6; MR 10%; AL CE; THAC0 1.

This fearsome being stands ten feet tall and wears a full suit of enchanted plate armor. Beneath the armor, Balor best resembles a cyclops, with a single flashing, red eye. This eye is normally hidden by the visor of Balor's helm, but when the visor is raised, the eye emits a *deathray* similar to that of a catoblepas. Balor's *deathray* has a 30-yard range, and anyone surprised by him has a 1 in 6 chance of gazing directly into the eye. The victim is slain unless a save vs. death magic is successful.

Balor is a violent, vengeful creature who has never forgotten the humiliation he suffered at the de Danaan's hands when he and his Fomorians were thrown out of Ireland. Now he has forged an alliance with the evil humans, the Milesians, and leads them once more against the now-divided de Danaans.

Mesopotamia

For many centuries, civilization flourished in the lands between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers—the Fertile Crescent. A fascinating and challenging campaign setting might be constructed incorporating the mythologies of several Mesopotamian cultures. The guidelines for campaigns during the Bronze Age given in the *Campaigns in Historical Time Periods* section would be appropriate here.

The lands known collectively as Mesopotamia are divided among several kingdoms. To the north is Assyria, a fierce, warlike nation. In the center is Akkad, a land of pastoral farmers and small cities. In the south is Sumer, a highly civilized, city-based culture. To the west is Babylonia, and to the east is Elam, both powerful states wracked by internal conflict and civil war.

These kingdoms are actually loose confederations of powerful city-states. Cities are built of mud bricks and stone, and surrounded by defensive walls. Each has its own god and priestly class. This god is considered the true ruler and owner of the city, so its temple owns and cultivates the city's agricultural lands, which lie beyond the city walls. A city's ruler, or god-king, is believed to be the earthly manifestation of the city god, and his power is absolute.

In addition to the local deities, the peoples of the Fertile Crescent also worship a pantheon of greater deities, led by Anu, the Sky-Bull. Anu is served by such deities as Enlil, the god of air and storms, Ishtar or Inanna, the sky goddess, and Girru, the god of fire.

Evil deities include Druaga and Nergal, gods of the underworld. The great power of evil, however, is Tiamat, dragon-goddess of saltwater and disorder, whose ultimate goal is to submerge the entire world beneath a new ocean.

The gods are in a state of conflict as Marduk, Anu's rival deity and god of cities, wishes to pursue a holy war against the chaos-dragon Tiamat and her followers. This is represented as an earthly conflict between the worshipers of Anu and those of Marduk, with the evil minions of Tiamat continually trying to incite total war and destruction.

Priests of the rival deities are continually striving for prominence, trying to gain the confidence of the various god-kings, and even engaging in open warfare, raiding or destroying each others' temples. This pleases the secret followers of Tiamat no end, and they are only too pleased to promote the conflict.

This is a time for heroes. The temples, cities, and kingdoms all need protection from enemies, and there are many earthly manifestations of the current divine conflict. Gods send their favored champions on quests against their rivals, and successful heroes can themselves become kings or queens with luck and bravery.

Priests hold a great deal of political and social power. Their services are needed to perform marriages, sanctify births, and bless the crops. In addition, the temples own and work the cities' agricultural lands, thereby controlling the economy of the region. Player character clerics will be representatives of their own city gods, or of the major gods. Conflicts may arise if the clerics in a party represent rival factions, such as Anu and Marduk.

Monsters: Much of the world beyond the cities is wild and unexplored. Creatures likely to be encountered include behir, centaur, chimera, hill and stone giants, gorgon, griffon, harpy, hippogriff, hydra, hyena, jackal, lamia, lammasu, leucrotta, manticores,

medusa, minotaur, mummy, naga, ogre, ogre mage, owlbear, pegasus, rakshasa, roc, scorpion, sphinx, and troll.

Heroes: The following NPCs may be encountered in a Babylonian setting.

Gilgamesh

20th level Fighter

Str 20 Dex 17 Con 18

Int 15 Wis 16 Cha 18

AC 5; MV 15; hp 200; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+2 (mace) +8; MR 10%; AL (N)G; THAC0 1.

Gilgamesh is the priest-king of Uruk, well known for his wisdom, mercy, and bravery in battle. He and his companion, Enkidu, wander the ancient world, slaying monsters and performing great deeds.

When Gilgamesh spurned the love of the goddess Ishtar, she demanded that her father, Anu, send the Bull of Heaven to destroy the hero. Gilgamesh and Enkidu slew the monster, but afterward, Enkidu sickened and died, leaving Gilgamesh grief-stricken.

Gilgamesh then journeyed forth to find a way to overcome death. Although he had many adventures along the way, the priest-king failed in his ultimate quest, and returned to Uruk a broken man.

Gilgamesh is a man of enormous strength and personal magnetism. He is passionate, with a great love of luxury. His only fear is of death—the fear of every mortal. He will agree to any quest or task which he can be persuaded will help him gain immortality.

Enkidu

18th level Fighter

Str 20 Dex 18 Con 16

Int 14 Wis 14 Cha 14

AC 5; MV 12; hp 175; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6 (mace) +8; MR 0%; AL N(G); THAC0 1.

Enkidu was created by the gods as a fitting companion to the greatest of mortal kings,

Gilgamesh. He is a massive, hairy man, thought by some to seem more animal than human. He lived in the wilderness, eating grass and hunting with animals, until Gilgamesh sent a harlot to entice Enkidu to journey to Uruk. After defeating the priest-king in a wrestling match, Enkidu swore eternal loyalty to Gilgamesh, and the two became fast friends and brothers. Together, they slew the fire-breathing giant, Huwawa, the first of many adventures.

When Enkidu helped Gilgamesh slay Anu's Bull of Heaven, the gods punished the pair by cursing Enkidu to sicken and die, thus triggering Gilgamesh's ultimately futile quest for immortality.

Ahlkish

12th level Fighter/10th level Cleric

Str 16 Dex 13 Con 14

Int 15 Wis 18 Cha 17

AC 9; MV 12; hp 75; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6 (short-sword) +1; MR Nil; AL CG; THAC0 9.

Ahlkish is not from any standard mythology, but is an example of the kind of hero encountered in the Fertile Crescent. A priestess of Marduk, Ahlkish is dedicated to furthering her god's cause throughout the region. As such, she is a dedicated enemy to all priests of the old pantheon, as well as the followers of Tiamat.

Ahlkish is a dark-haired woman who customarily fights with a bronze short sword. She is gregarious and friendly, but can instantly turn dangerous should she encounter enemy clerics. Her exploits throughout the land are semi-legendary, and she has many enemies among the priests of Anu.

Africa

The ancient lands of Africa are home to many different cultures and peoples, long neglected as a setting for adventure games.

Following are suggestions for a pseudo-African setting based loosely on several major African cultural groups.

Africa is a vast continent, with great bands of desert, rich grassy veldtlands, and fertile green jungles. Each region has its own separate cultural traditions. All are of roughly bronze age level; use the rules for the Bronze Age from the *Campaigns in Historical Time Periods* section.

The desert lands are home to nomadic herdsman who raise camels and goats, traveling from oasis to oasis. Some cities have sprung up in the deserts, centered on larger oases, and actively trading with the nomads.

The veldt is home to several fictitious warring kingdoms, the largest being those of the Zara and the Alashi. Veldt economies are based on farming and the herding of cattle, bringing considerable prosperity and an advanced level of civilization. Veldt tribes are ruled by hereditary monarchs who dwell in vast palace complexes, or Kraal. These monarchs can be either male or female.

Veldt states have well-developed military traditions and sophisticated tactics. Their warriors fight with wide-bladed thrusting spears and large cow-hide shields. National armies are organized into large units known as *impis*, divided according to age and experience.

The veldt dwellers worship a pantheon of animistic deities led by the great creator Iqbi. All things—trees, rocks, mountains, rivers—are believed to possess an individual soul. These souls can be influenced through clerical magic, and tribal clerics hold an important niche in society. Priests cast auguries using shells, beads, or the entrails of animals. These auguries carry great significance, and can dissuade even the most powerful ruler from his or her current course of action.

The Zara are ruled by a mighty warrior known as Ushanta, who has reformed the kingdom's corrupt and inefficient military.

and led them to several major victories over surrounding states. The Alashi, deadly rivals of the Zara, have responded by increasing the size of their own impis, and have also dispatched assassins to Zara territory in an attempt to kill Ushanta and thus behead the Zara juggernaut.

The veldt is also home to tribes of wemic, who alternately war against and trade with the humans of the plains, depending on the individual tribe's attitudes.

South of the veldt lie the jungle lands, which harbor a bewildering variety of human and demihuman tribes that vary in social level from hunter-gatherers through pastoral agriculturists.

Tribes: Some of the best-known human tribes include the M'gwandi, the Falani, and the Dinkara.

The M'gwandi are divided among several autonomous villages, but are capable of uniting against a common threat. Each village is governed by a headman and a council of wise women. All M'gwandi headmen meet at times of crisis.

M'gwandi worship a number of animistic jungle spirits, and each home is believed to have its own spirit guardian. Only the women may serve as priests; the eldest of these form the council of wise women, who advise the village headmen.

Warriors of the M'gwandi tribe specialize in stealth and ambush, using poison arrows and blowguns. M'gwandi hunters are widely respected, and many legends are told about their tracking and hunting skills.

The Falani are somewhat less peaceful in their relations than the M'gwandi. Their villages are ruled by absolute monarchs, who choose their own successors. Although most of these monarchs are men, female rulers are not unknown. Both males and females can be warriors.

Religious belief is similar to that of the M'gwandi, although the Falani believe that

some natural phenomena such as storms, floods, and insect plagues are evil beings in themselves, and must periodically be appeased with animal sacrifice. Falani are strongly influenced by omens and prophetic events. Falani wise men are all clerics, and they are continually consulted on the significance of omens.

Warfare between Falani villages is a way of life, but this warfare is highly ritualized. If two chiefs have a quarrel, they agree to meet in battle in a pre-arranged place. Their warriors, armed with spears, bows, and small round shields decorated with shells and feathers, meet and exchange ritualistic insults, then advance into combat.

Battle proceeds until the first warrior is killed. The side whose warrior is slain is considered to have lost the battle. It is up to the losing side whether to continue the battle or concede to the winners' demands and leave the site. If the losers wish to continue, the battle goes on until a second warrior is slain. The side that loses the second warrior is then considered the loser, and so on.

With conflict ceremonialized to this extent, the Falani rarely engage in wars of conquest, preferring instead to defend themselves against raids by the neighboring M'gwandi and Dinkara.

The Dinkara are both the most advanced and the most warlike of the jungle peoples. Living in walled towns made up of wattle and daub houses, the entire body of Dinkara people are ruled over by a single male monarch. The king is advised by a council of sorcerers—actually, both clerics and wizards—and is defended by a unique military unit known as his Maiden Guard.

The Maiden Guard is made up entirely of female warriors, on the theory that since the Dinkara are strongly patriarchal and women cannot succeed to the throne, members of the guard are unlikely to overthrow their king.

The Maiden Guard are armed with iron-

tipped spears or, more rarely, steel scimitars obtained through trade from the desert tribes. The Guard is accompanied into battle by specially-trained black panthers. Some of the Guard form a cavalry of sorts, mounted on gigantic saber-toothed cats. Where these cats come from, and how the Dinkara train them, is not known.

Ordinary Dinkara warriors (including males) are also potent fighters, using bow, spear, axe, or club to good effect. While jungle warfare is hazardous, and often favors the more flexible organization of the M'gwandi or the Falani, the Dinkara have been making headway, conquering several Falani villages and converting them to the Dinkara faith and social system.

The Dinkara worship a supreme creator-being, Kashar, and his four wives, each of whom represents a different point on the compass—Aila (north), Basha (south), Nyi (east), and Kusoe (west). The various children of the creator and his wives form a pantheon of demigods and heroes.

Other tribes and nations also inhabit the jungle, some human and some nonhuman. The mysterious beings known to the Dinkara as the Hu-Kwani, or tree children, are analogous to elves, although their culture is more primitive than others of that race. Tribes of halflings also inhabit the jungle, but they are shy and retiring, preferring to stay out of the way and survive simply by remaining unnoticed.

Monsters: Africa is an incredibly rich biological region. DMs should consider inventing some new monsters to go along with the exotic setting of an African-based campaign. Other monsters from the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM™* suitable to such a campaign include: herd animal, ankheg, ant, giant ant lion, carnivorous ape, baboon, basilisk, bat, beetle, behir, bugbear, carrion crawler, catoblepas, great cats, centipede, couatl, crocodile, displacer beast, black dragon, bronze

dragon, dragon turtle, dwarf, elephant, elf, giant fish, frog, fungus, ghoul, gnom, halfling, hellhound, hornet, hyena, jackal, jackalwere, kobold, leech, lizard, lizard man, manticores, myconid, naga, obliivax, oozes/slimes/jellies (all), orc, otyugh, owl, owlbear, piranha, carnivorous plant, pseudodragon, deadly puddings, rakshasa, ray, roper, rot grub, scorpion, shambling mound, snake, spider, stirge, giant toad, treant, vampire, wyvern.

Heroes: The following characters may be encountered as NPCs in an African setting.

Ynyola Cewa

16th level Warrior

Str 18/76 Dex 18 Con 16

Int 13 Wis 9 Cha 14

AC 7; MV 12; hp 80; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+3 (spear) +4; MR Nil; AL CG; THAC0 5.

The greatest warrior of the Zara people, Ynyola can be found throughout the region, fighting battles for the Zara and their allies, hunting legendary game animals, or traveling to other lands to learn new fighting styles or military strategies. He is loyal to King Ushanta, and will gladly sacrifice his life for the monarch.

Like most Zara warriors, Ynyola is proud and boastful. He can back his boasts up with deeds, however, and all warriors throughout the land respect and fear him.

Ynyola fights with an enchanted spear given to him by a Dinkara holy man. He also carries a magical cowhide shield +2.

Shola K'kui

15th level Cleric

Str 14 Dex 15 Con 13

Int 15 Wis 18 Cha 16

AC 9; MV 12; hp 36; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (spear); MR Nil; AL NG; THAC0 12.

A Falani high priest, Shola spends much of his time in the jungle, communicating with

the naturalistic spirits there. He is a quiet man who conserves his words, speaking only when he feels it is important.

Shola has been called upon several times to defend his people from Dinkara incursions. He feels that open warfare between the two nations can lead only to disaster, but is so far unable to persuade any chiefs to meet and work out differences peacefully.

Shola fights with a spear and carries a sacred lion's-tail rod that functions as a *staff of withering*.

Inaka Kyo

14th level Warrior

Str 17 Dex 16 Con 16

Int 13 Wis 11 Cha 15

AC 8; MV 12; hp 78; #AT 2; Dmg 1d6+1 (spear) +1 or 1d8+1 (broadsword) +1; MR Nil; AL CG, THAC0 7.

Inaka is an officer of the Dinkara Maiden Guard. She is always accompanied by a black panther named Kwashi. When not on duty, she is fond of adventuring in the jungle, veldt lands, and beyond.

In combat, Inaka fights with a *spear* +1 or a *steel broadsword* +1, which she took from a raiding desert chieftain she defeated in battle.

Lost Worlds

The wildest, most free-wheeling campaign setting is one made of whole cloth from the DM's own imagination. Literature is rife with examples of lost or different worlds with only enough similarities to our own as to give them a point of reference. Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter (cowboy on Mars), Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger (abrasive professor discovers dinosaurs in South America) and Raymond's Flash Gordon (campy science fiction) are only a sample of the fictional heroes who find themselves in alien territory

Lost worlds are perfect for AD&D® campaigns. Characters can come from virtually any campaign setting, even modern-day earth, and can be flung into a strange world, populated by races and monsters that are totally unfamiliar. The entries that follow offer suggestions for setting up a lost world campaign, populating it, and running it.

The Hidden Land

The simplest sort of "lost world" isn't really a world at all. Somewhere, behind an impenetrable mountain range or at the top of a gigantic, isolated plateau, lies a hidden realm where time stands still.

In literature, these places are usually living time capsules, where dinosaurs (as in Burroughs' *Land that Time Forgot* or Conan Doyle's *The Lost World*), vikings (as in Ian Cameron's *The Lost Ones*), ancient Romans, or other antique civilizations (Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King* or H. Rider Haggard's *She*) still survive and flourish.

Lost lands differ from other lost worlds primarily in terms of scale. The limited land area of such a place requires some "impassable" barrier to keep the inhabitants in and the rest of the world out. This barrier usually has one deadly route in, discovered by an explorer whose journal or notes fall into the characters' hands.

The civilizations encountered may be pastoral and peaceful (in which case they are threatened with discovery and destruction by the outside world) or totalitarian and decadent (in which case the heroes are caught up in a revolution or battle for freedom). In the latter case, outsiders are seen variously as threats or as pawns in a political power struggle, and may be threatened with messy death or compelled to serve an evil overlord.

The size of a lost lands campaign limits its duration. While suitable for a multi-part adventure with numerous sub-plots, the lost



land probably cannot sustain a lengthy AD&D® campaign. If using the lost land for adventures, it may be best to follow a specific plot line in which the characters discover the valley or plateau, encounter its inhabitants, help them in their struggle for freedom or assist them in defending the encroachment of the outside world, then make their escape as the only route in is permanently destroyed.

Lost Continents

A cataclysm on a global scale could cause a civilization such as Mu or Atlantis to vanish beneath the waves or be spun off into space. In either case, such a place could survive in some form, and could be encountered by adventurers.

The causes for a lost continent's disappearance are varied. Its inhabitants may have advanced too far, too fast, and destroyed themselves with super-science. A fateful disaster, such as an earthquake or tidal wave may have plunged the continent beneath the sea, or swallowed it up into the earth. The gods may have taken vengeance upon prideful natives and banished the land to a parallel dimension.

Ancient manuscripts and the chronicles of antique explorers can provide clues to the existence of a fabulous lost civilization and give information to its location. Modern-day explorers may catch a glimpse of a land as it rises above the ocean for a day or so, or may find evidence of civilization dredged up from the sea floor or on a windswept tundra where no such thing should exist.

The quest for the continent could take some time. In fact, several adventures could take place as the characters unknowingly accumulate evidence of the lost continent's existence and location. Maps, old journals, artworks from an unknown civilization, the whispered remembrances of aged elf-monarchs—each of these can provide a piece of the puzzle.

Eventually, perhaps with a little encouragement from the DM, the players will be able to fit all the pieces together. Once the players understand that an entire lost continent waits to be explored, they will probably waste no time in preparing to go there. Failing this, they may be hired by a wealthy patron who wishes information on this strange land, either based on scientific curiosity or sheer greed. Such an NPC patron may go so far as to accompany the party, possibly causing problems due to inexperience.

The inhabitants of a lost continent will run the gamut of types listed below, perhaps with an emphasis on the decadent or civilized end of the scale. They may be the ancestors of more modern civilizations, and may have similar cultures. Monsters will also vary from the entirely alien to the familiar, with an emphasis on supposedly extinct species such as dinosaurs or pleistocene mammals that thrive in the continent's isolated environment.

Lost continent campaigns are far more open than simple lost valleys or islands. The duration of the campaign is limited only by the players' interest, and how much work a DM wants to put into it.

Hollow Worlds

Another version of the lost continent is an entire world hidden beneath the ordinary world. A secret entrance, long concealed from the eyes of mortals, leads to a wondrous inner world. In such works as Edgar Rice Burroughs' *At the Earth's Core*, or even the HOLLOW WORLD® setting for the D&D® game, adventurers must explore this secret, undiscovered world, encountering the numerous cultures and monsters that dwell there.

The design of a hollow world is wide open. The sheer magnitude of the task—the entire interior of a planet—might be daunting, but

the idea is to start small, perhaps with the area where the adventurers first enter. From there, the world can be built as quickly or slowly as the PCs require.

A hollow world campaign is a good compromise between the limitations of a lost valley and the overwhelming job of designing a complete new world. The cultures and wildlife will probably be related, at least distantly, to those of the surface world. Alien peoples and creatures will certainly exist, but the whole of the region need not be drawn entirely from imagination.

The physics of a hollow world may present problems to the ambitious DM. The interior of such a world will have a concave horizon, rather than the gently curved convex one we are familiar with. A ship sailing into the distance will grow smaller and smaller, and rise higher and higher, rather than vanishing over the curvature of the earth as we know it.

Such a world requires a light source. This may be the core of the planet, suspended by gravity in the center of the hollow sphere. It may be an exotic mineral or chemical in the crust of the planet which fluoresces and illuminates the interior. Or perhaps the mantle of the planet itself may be active enough to light up the hollow interior.

Atmosphere and climate also present challenges. Where does air come from? Does it circulate from the outside world, or is it generated in the interior? What is the weather like? Does rain fall in the form of water seeping down from the upper world, or do exotic weather patterns circle the inner globe?

Of course, after a while, normal physics breaks down, owing to the basic unlikelihood of such a hollow world existing and functioning. Frustrated DMs who are at a loss to answer the questions presented above should simply ignore them or come up with some suitable double-talk explanation for the phenomena ("The ancient ones created the machines that provide light and water, and

we know not how they function," for example). Unexplainable phenomena might also be explained through magic. The function of an AD&D® campaign is to provide fun and entertainment, not to get bogged down meaningless scientific jargon.

Other Worlds

The ultimate "lost world" is truly an entire world. Other world campaigns offer the most diversity and possibility for adventure, but they are also the hardest to create.

Creating Another World

Many lost worlds, such as Edgar Rice Burroughs' Barsoom, Alan Burt Akers' Kregan, or Alex Raymond's Mongo, have virtually no references to our own earth. In this case, a prospective other-world DM must populate the world with entirely new creatures and cultures, or use beasts from the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*™ that the players have never encountered.

While it involves a lot of work, the creation of new races and monsters can be exciting and rewarding. Determine the new creatures' abilities and experience, as described in Chapter 8 of the *DUNGEON MASTER*™ Guide.

The DM may also take ordinary AD&D game creatures and change their appearances, names, and abilities sufficiently to seem alien. In this way, familiar orcs gain red skin and scaly crests, becoming the horde-beasts of Kyshrakk the Merciless; elves grow tall and blue, and fight with spears instead of bows, to become the Ancient Guardians who defend the Silver Forest, and so on. Using this technique, a DM can create unique, exotic races without extreme effort.

Lost worlds may have cultures roughly based on earth—ancient Greeks or Romans, for example—that have been transplanted, but have evolved over the centuries. These

once-familiar cultures might share the stage with the alien races and creatures, so a good deal of creative work will be involved

Inhabitants

Each lost world has its own cast of characters. Similarities turn up in lost world literature and, although the DM is free to create different creatures, the list below details some of the more prominent types.

Alien Overlords: Behind the scenes, a race of alien geniuses observes, studies, and manipulates events. The Overlords are usually creatures of enormous power and scientific advancement, and show themselves only rarely, preferring to have their wishes carried out by unwitting dupes or agents. Often, the Overlords themselves created and populated the lost world, kidnapping entire civilizations to this end. The inhabitants—when aware of their existence—revere the Overlords as gods.

The Overlords' motives are often obscure and cloaked in mystery. They may be simple scientists, observing the behavior of other species. They may be using the natives as slaves, taking the best spoils of local labor and letting the populace squabble over the rest. Or, they may simply be playing a sadistic game, watching as civilizations rise and fall, species battle for survival, and individual heroes perform acts of good or evil while the Overlords watch with amusement or bet on the outcome.

Whatever their motivations, the alien overlords are rarely benevolent. The best the world's inhabitants can hope for is a sort of benign neutrality, or the same affection shown a prized pet. An individual overlord is likely to consider itself vastly superior to any inhabitant of the world, and show only the most detached of concerns.

This may or may not truly be the case, for such affected superiority is often the result of

paranoia or a species-wide inferiority complex, and those adventurers who encounter the alien overlords may be the ones to unmask the world's secret masters.

Degenerate Remnants: When the Alien Overlords reach the end of their life cycle, or their decadent lifestyle finally catches up with them, they are likely to become pathetic shells of their former selves. These degenerate, once-powerful creatures live on in distant, shunned, or "haunted" portions of the world, living amid rotting finery and relying on ancient devices which they have long since forgotten how to build or repair. Most live alone or in small groups, wandering the cast-off remains of their once-great civilization, mumbling quietly, or speaking of past glories.

Such individuals can still be dangerous opponents, and their very decadence has driven many insane. Many of their ancient devices still function, and in the wrong hands, can cause untold destruction.

Degenerate civilizations need not be alien in nature. They may be the final remains of a decadent civilization (see below).

The Decadent Civilization: Unlike the Overlords, the Decadent Civilization originated on the lost world, grew in strength, conquered many lands, and then turned in upon itself, its people wallowing in luxuries and losing interest in the outside world.

Such nations may still be powerful, controlling vast empires, or they may be weak, pitiful city-states locked behind walls, served by legions of disinterested mercenaries.

Decadent civilizations are often highly stratified, with a small number of elite rulers lording over hordes of oppressed, slavish subjects. These rulers remain in power through the force of their army or high-technology devices which protect them from their enemies.

Many such civilizations are ripe for revolt—a perfect situation for newly-arrived PCs. An adventuring party can fall in with a

band of rebels, or be captured by the land's wicked rulers. This can lead to an all-out civil war in which the heroes help the oppressed subjects overthrow their master and transform the realm into the Noble Civilization (see below).

Decadent civilizations and their rulers also make good running antagonists, and can represent a constant threat to the freedom of the world.

The Noble Civilization: Somewhere on almost every world exists a land where peace and good fellowship reign. Its rulers are benevolent, its warriors brave, its people honest and hard-working. In the noble civilization, every right-thinking individual is devoted to freedom and justice, wars are never fought unjustly, and everyone is kind to animals.

Noble civilizations are usually home to heroes, and often need to be defended against the forces of evil. In fact, the noble civilization may have been evil or decadent once, but straightened up as soon as the heroes introduced the wonders of democracy and good dental hygiene.

Such a place—which may vary in size from empire to city-state—is a good place to start a lost world campaign. Adventurers may arrive in time to save the noble civilization from invasion and destruction, or they may help lead an evil state's people to freedom and transform the once-corrupt land into a model of enlightenment.

The noble civilization is certainly not free of evil or villains. In fact, such individuals seem to pop up with depressing regularity. The evil wizard, diabolical warlord, or plotting counselor, is invariably portrayed as the exception, and is soon exposed and defeated.

The prosperity of the noble civilization is usually a thorn in the side of less benevolent lands, as well, and the heroes' home will need defending against ravaging hordes. In many instances, the noble civilization is constantly

under siege by its enemies, and has little time to be benevolent. Such situations are ripe for player character intervention.

The Noble Savages: Civilization often leads, at least in the minds of many fantasy novelists, to a loss of solid values such as honor, bravery, and the martial spirit. While such an overly-simplistic view does not hold water in the "real" world, it is certainly a powerful concept in the worlds of film and literature.

Beyond the decadent cities and their teeming crowds and corrupt nobles, brave warriors roam the plains mounted on their sturdy war mounts, or barbarian princes lead stern-jawed heroes into battle. Heroes often draw their trusty sidekicks or faithful allies from these legions of noble savages.

Alternately, noble savages may be the PCs' opponents, fighting with enormous courage and honor, even if they are in the wrong cause. Such noble savages can sometimes be converted to the heroes' cause with suitable acts of bravery and martial virtue by the PCs.

These individuals have little regard for the soft "civilized" world and its weak, pale, decadent inhabitants. Warrior virtues are, of course, the only virtues truly worth pursuing. Such foolishness as learning, science, creature comforts, and rational thought get in the way of pure, manly adventure and combat.

Getting There

Most of the fun of lost worlds is the fact that they are truly "lost" from the "real" world, and most fiction features outsiders exploring and adventuring there. This section suggests several origins for lost world PCs.

The most obvious origin for adventurers is from an existing AD&D® campaign world. Characters may arrive from the DM's own world, or from any of the commercially available campaigns such as the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting or DRAGONLANCE® cam-

paign world. The RAVENLOFT® campaign setting describes one method for characters to travel from one world to another.

Characters might also originate from earth. Characters from the nineteenth century or earlier will be familiar with swordplay and primitive gunpowder weapons, while PCs from our own time will have a modern perspective on the bizarre worlds they observe. Modern PCs will have problems in combat, unless they are fencers or members of historical recreation groups, which will give them a familiarity with basic fighting techniques.

A popular feature of many lost world stories—especially those set on a planet other than earth—is that the new world's lesser gravity or different atmosphere gives ordinary humans considerable advantages in battle. This may be simulated by providing PCs with a +1 or +2 bonus to Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution.

The Lost World of Chanak

The following section details a sample lost world, and gives examples of terrain, monsters, alien races, and methods to transport characters there.

Location

Chanak is a planet located in a tiny pocket universe, with just enough room for the world and its single primary, a red-yellow star called The Eye. The world is roughly the same size as earth, but has two moons, known by a variety of names, most commonly as Brother and Sister. A Chanaki day is 20 hours long, and a year is 400 days. Chanak has links to many different worlds—Krynn, Oerth, Toril, and our own Earth. Access to the world of Chanak is random at best (see below), so it is hard to determine any exact means of reaching the world.

History

Chanak lies in a tiny unique universe or plane. It was apparently created by artificial means several million years ago. There has been much speculation in scholarly circles about the world's creators. Many claim that the world was made as a laboratory for godlike beings who snatched species from other worlds, then observed how they reacted together.

Exactly who these beings were, no one knows. Several inexplicable artifacts and buildings are scattered across Chanak, but these are not considered conclusive proof that the "Ancient Ones" (as most people call them) ever existed.

Strangers still arrive on Chanak, pulled from other worlds by a random phenomenon called "The Lights." These lights flash simultaneously in both Chanak and an alternate world, and instantaneously transport anyone nearby from their world to Chanak. From time to time, individuals from Chanak are transported to the connected world, but this is quite rare.

From time to time, entire cities or armies have been transported to Chanak. In one case, an entire Viking raiding fleet from ancient Earth was carried off to Chanak, to found a Viking empire on the new world.

Geography and Climate

Chanak is similar to earth in many ways—tropical jungle and desert near the equator, temperate forest and tundra near the poles. The planet has a greater axial tilt than earth, so seasons are similar, but more extreme.

There are four major continents: Yulik to the north, mostly tundra and pine forest; Warua and Sagama near the equator, with temperate forests in their northern and southern regions and jungle and desert across the midsections; and Iaro in the south, mostly grasslands and tundra.

Lands and Peoples

As may be guessed from the information above, Chanak is home to many different races. Some—elves and orcs—are familiar to adventurer game players. These races, however, have evolved considerably since their arrival on Chanak, and now bear little resemblance to their forebears.

Elves have split into numerous subraces, which vary in stature, skin coloration, and social order. The most prominent are the blue-skinned Eldred, who live at high altitudes in cold, white castles and engage in esoteric studies beyond the comprehension of most other races. The Eldred are an excellent source of information, magic, and technological devices, but they are aloof and their dwellings are all but inaccessible.

Orcs have changed considerably as well. Some retain their familiar appearance and violent society, but others have grown more civilized and comparatively graceful. The Lrik-Aa of Yulik, for example, have several large and sophisticated kingdoms, pursue art and science with enthusiasm, and can be of any alignment, not only lawful evil. The Urik-Aa have retained the military nature of orcish society, however, and are accomplished warriors and aggressively expand their empires whenever possible.

The most common race on Chanak is human. Chanaki humans come from many different worlds, and are anything but uniform in appearance, society, and language. Humans of every color and culture exist on Chanak.

Leading human nations include the Northmen of Yulik, descendants of ancient Earth Vikings; the Kingdom of Anzara on Sagama, originally founded by dark ages Balkan knights; and Vismone, located on Warua, a republic inhabited by violet-skinned humans from an unknown world. Despite their exotic appearance, Vismonians are clearly human,

and can interact and breed with other humans freely.

Most humans on Chanak are not as civilized as these groups, however. Arriving on a primitive world, these humans have reverted to primitive cultures, some living at a stone-age level of technology, others rising to a bronze- or iron-age level.

Many other races inhabit Chanak. No one has yet been able to catalog them all, for new ones are discovered all the time. Several of the more interesting or prominent races are listed below.

Klorthak: These red-skinned, four-armed humanoids are native to the harsh lands of Iaro. They sport bestial faces, savage headcrests, and a ferocious warrior ethic. Males and females are completely equal (in fact, there is little physical difference between the sexes).

Klorthak live in huge walled cities defended by sun-cannon and other technological weapons. Their quarrelsome nature has prevented the klorthak from uniting, limiting them to warring city-states.

Klorthak serve throughout Chanak as mercenaries. They are known for their loyalty and professionalism—once a klorthak has given his word, he will never break it as long as his employer does not cheat him. Should an employer betray the klorthak, that individual will not live long.

Statistics for a typical klorthak warrior follow. They are treated as monsters, but, like other intelligent species on Chanak, klorthak can easily be adapted to player character status.

Typical Klorthak: Int Average; AL LN; AC 5; MV 16; HD 3+3; THAC0 17; #AT 2 or 4; Dmg by weapon (x2) or 1d4 (x4); SA Nil; SD Parry*; SZ L (10' tall); ML 18; XP 270. Klorthak armed with two weapons may simultaneously parry once and attack once each round of combat.

Shamki: A diminutive race of reptilian philosophers, the Shamki have no kingdoms or permanent settlements. They live in small enclaves in human or Urk-Aa cities throughout Chanak, where they engage in a variety of scholarly pursuits.

Shamki are naturally passive; they will not fight except to save their lives or the lives of their family. Although they are generally friendly, most non-Shamki consider them to be overly talkative, obsessed with trivia, and to have a very short attention span. All of these things are true, but they are part of the Shamki's nature.

These creatures also serve throughout Chanak as wizards, clerics, and scribes. Shamki sometimes accompany adventuring groups, but dealing with them requires a great deal of patience.

An average shamki has the following statistics, and may have spell-casting capabilities:

Typical Shamki: Int High; AL CN; AC 9; MV 18; HD 1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon or 1d4; SZ S (4' tall), ML 10; XP 15.

Tlesh: Physically, Tlesh of Warua are mammalian creatures most resembling upright wolves. Their society varies greatly depending upon their environment, but is always nomadic in nature.

Although these troublesome creatures are nomads, they are not limited to a single region. Tlesh adapt their nomadic lifestyle to whatever terrain they are in. Sea Tlesh, for example, travel in massive city-ships, moving from place to place, fishing, foraging, and (most often) raiding against land-dwellers; forest Tlesh wander through woodland areas, setting up temporary shelters, mining, gathering, and engaging in short-term farming.

Tlesh are also troublesome due to their aggressive natures. Raiding tlesh have been known to lay waste to entire regions, and an individual tlesh is an extremely potent war-

rior. Tlesh are also somewhat xenophobic, believing other races to be little better than animals, and completely suitable as prey.

Tlesh may be clerics or wizards as well as fighters.

Typical Tlesh: Int Ave.-high; AL LN; AC 7; MV 12; HD 1+2; THAC0 20; #AT 1 or 3; Dmg by weapon or 1d4(x2)/1d6; SZ M; ML 14; XP 35.

Character Classes and Races

All character classes function normally on Chanak. Dwarves, gnomes, and halflings do not exist naturally on Chanak, but could arrive through the actions of the Lights.

Humans, elves, and orcs all exist on Chanak as discussed above. Urk-Aa can be fighters, clerics, or thieves.

Eldred function as normal elves, except that they may advance to 18th level as mages, but are limited to a maximum of 10th level as fighters.

Other races, including those listed above, can be adapted to PC races, using the rules in chapter two of the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide*. DMs in a lost worlds campaign such as Chanak should use their imagination to create new races and give players a chance to play these new races as PCs.

Monsters

Monsters come in a bewildering variety. Creatures from Earth, Krynn, Toril, and Oerth rub shoulders with species from hundreds of other worlds. Indeed, some species may have evolved on Chanak itself. Some of the better known species follow.

Drogg: A predatory reptile about the size of a coyote, drogg roam tundra or grasslands throughout Chanak in packs of 3-36. They are vicious in the extreme, attacking anything they encounter, regardless of size or relative strength. Mortality among drogg packs is

high, but the creatures make up for it with a high birth rate. Some years are called by locals "drogg years," during which the drogg population explodes, and packs fight each other for survival. Travel during drogg years is, needless to say, hazardous.

Drogg: Int animal; AL N; AC 4; MV 24; HD 4+4; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6(x2)/1d8, SA Poison*; SZ M; ML 12; XP 420. Victims of a drogg bite (the 1d8 attack) must save vs. poison or suffer 2d6 points of damage.

Shioka: This large aquatic beast is the scourge of Chanak's seas. Resembling gigantic sharks, but with three dorsal fins and whalelike fluked tails, shioka have a distressing tendency to attack ships due to their resemblance to certain prey animals.

Shioka: Int animal; AL N, AC 1, MV Sw18; HD 12; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 3-30; SA swallow whole*; SZ G; ML 12; XP 5,000. On an unadjusted attack roll of 20 (except when a 20 is required to hit), the shioka has swallowed any target that is man-sized or smaller. The victim must save vs. death magic or be slain permanently.

Marjag: These solitary, lionlike predators hunt the plains of the equatorial continents. They are highly intelligent, lawful good, and have their own unique society.

Marjag are sometimes found in company with heroes or adventuring parties. They dislike persecution of the innocent, although they consider themselves to be morally superior to most hunters since they claim that they always give their prey a fair chance to escape. Marjag are loyal and faithful, and will never serve with anyone of evil alignment.

Some marjag (perhaps one in twenty) can cast spells as a 4th level cleric.

Marjag: Int high; AL LG; AC 6; MV 18; HD 5; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d8(x2)/2d6; SA kick*; SD camouflage*; SZ L; ML 18; XP 975.

If a marjag strikes with both claws (1d8 attacks), then it can kick with its back legs for an additional 2d6. Marjag can hide in plains or grassland terrain. A hidden marjag has only a 10% chance of discovery; if undiscovered, the marjag can then attack with surprise automatically.

Technology

Many Chanaki scholars point to the large number of mysterious technological items scattered across the globe as proof that an advanced race once inhabited the planet. Some even suggest that this "advanced race" is the one that actually created Chanak.

Much of this technology is incomprehensible—vast machines with no apparent function, hand-held devices that emit colored lights and do little else, featureless cubes of indestructible metal, and so on.

Some of these items, however, are useful. Such things are rare and highly valued by their owners. Effects vary. Several duplicate the effects of magical items (*wand of enemy detection*, *staff of wizardry*, *chime of opening*, etc.). Others have entirely new effects (performing mathematical calculations, synthesizing food or other useful items, allowing observation of distant objects, etc.).

The best known of these items are, not surprisingly, weapons. Ancient weapon technology was based on an unusual type of crystal that contains some form of inert energy. When an electrical current is applied to the crystals, they discharge some of their energy. Ancient weapons consist of a rifle or pistol body (familiar to twentieth century adventurers), with a small battery in the grip, and a length of crystal set in the barrel. The longer the barrel, the more energy can be discharged. When

the trigger is pulled, the battery applies current to the crystal, sending a portion of its energy at the target. The crystals contain limited amounts of energy, and can run out of charges unexpectedly. No one knows where the crystals first came from, so once a weapon is out of "ammo," it cannot be repaired.

Crys-pistol. The smallest form of crystal weapon is easily concealable. It inflicts 1d8 points of damage per shot. Each time (not each round) the gun is fired, there is a one percent chance that the weapon will run out of charges.

Crys-rifle. This weapon resembles an old long-rifle, with a barrel three to four feet long. It inflicts 1d12 points of damage per shot. With each shot, there is a two percent chance that it will run out of charges.

Crys-revolver. A technological experiment by Anzaran scientists, the crys-revolver resembles a Gatling gun from earth's nineteenth century. The Anzarans stripped several crys-rifles of their crystals and placed them in a revolving cylinder linked to a series of rifle batteries. When rotated by a hand crank, the barrels discharge in turn, inflicting enormous damage. Twelve barrels are the maximum practical limit for the weapon. Each round, 2d6 cylinders fire, each inflicting 1d12 points of damage.

Each round, there is a two percent chance that one or more of the barrels have been exhausted. If this happens, roll 1d6. The result

is the number of barrels that have been exhausted. Subtract this number from all subsequent rolls to determine the number of cylinders that fire. Eventually, of course, all the barrels will be exhausted and the gun rendered useless, but this does not stop the Anzarans from employing this awesome weapon in battle. Private ownership of such a weapon is rare in the extreme.

The Ancient Ones

What the people of Chanak do not know is that the so-called "Ancient Ones" still exist, lingering deep beneath the surface of the planet, observing events above.

The Ancient Ones call themselves the Risik, and they did, indeed, create Chanak thousands of years ago. Today, they resemble little more than disembodied nervous systems floating in tanks of nutrients, held in bunkers deep below ground. Their original form is anyone's guess.

The theories about Chanak being a vast laboratory for the Risik are true. The Ancient Ones are responsible for the mysterious lights that snatch individuals from other worlds and bring them here. Risik are possessed of an insatiable curiosity and have for thousands of years observed, studied, and taken voluminous notes on the interactions of the species they brought to Chanak.

Many of the technological devices left on

Item	Cost	Weight	Size	Type	Speed Factor	Damage	
						S-M	L
Crys-pistol	1,000 gp	8 lbs.	S	P	2	1d8	1d8
Crys-rifle	2,500 gp	12 lbs.	L	P	4	1d12	1d12
Crys-revolver	10,000 gp	75 lbs.	L	P	10	Special	

Missile Weapon Ranges				
Weapon	ROF	S	M	L
Crys-pistol	2	10	20	30
Crys-rifle	2	15	30	60
Crys-revolver	Special	15	30	60

the surface are put there by the Risik to see how long it will take the inhabitants to figure them out. Some have unusual effects upon users, increasing intelligence and basic abilities, while others have no function whatsoever, and are placed on the surface simply as a control.

Exactly what the Risik have in mind is up to the individual DM. Perhaps they will continue to observe events on the surface and do little else. Perhaps they will eventually determine which race is superior, and grant that race special abilities. Or perhaps they simply wish to determine which species makes the best and most docile slaves.

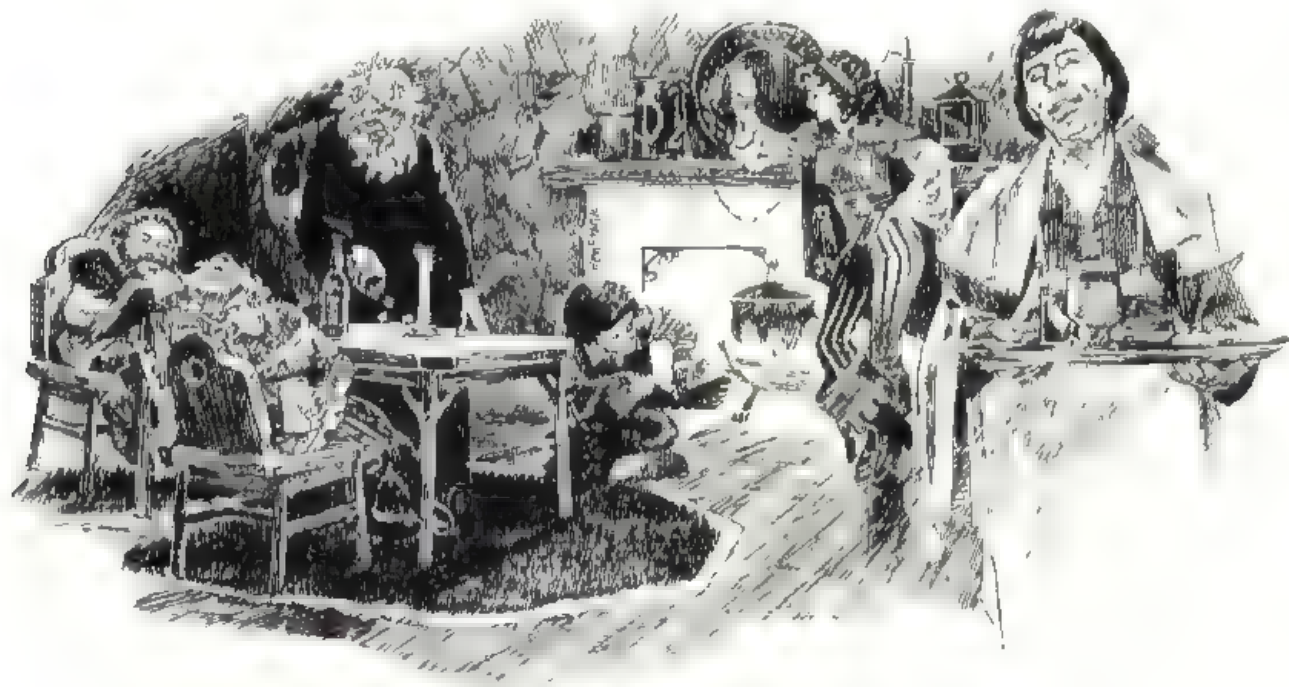
Getting There

As discussed earlier, outside characters are probably best as a beginning adventuring

group on Chanak. These characters can arrive from any other AD&D® world by way of the Risik's lights. Once on Chanak, the adventurers will have to figure out what has happened to them, survive in the harsh new world, and (possibly) how to get home.

After initial adventuring in Chanak, PCs can be introduced who are of native extraction, including the local human races, or such exotics as the tlesh. These individuals can join the original group as friends met along the way or hired help.

Another option is to take characters from 20th century earth and place them in Chanak. The advantages of this sort of campaign are discussed previously. Taking the players themselves as PCs is another limitless possibility.



Miscellaneous Campaigns

Finally, numerous campaign ideas cannot easily be pigeonholed. Several are given below, and DMs are encouraged to come up with their own off-the-wall ideas for original AD&D® campaigns.

Most of the following ideas are best suited to campaigns of short duration. While changing PCs into animals might be interesting for a few sessions, it is not something players will want to do for very long. Other ideas—such as the players as PCs section—are more appropriate to long-term campaigning.

Players as PCs

One of the most interesting and challenging options for DMs and players is to convert the players themselves into AD&D® characters. When actually playing themselves, and placing their “own” lives at risk, players may proceed much more cautiously and—in many cases—realistically.

Admittedly, converting players’ attributes to game statistics is a touchy subject. How do you rate George’s intelligence or Susan’s wisdom without offending the players themselves? What class should each player be? A player may insist, for example, that since he has taken kendo classes, he should start out as a third-level fighter. Another player who has played paintball or similar combat and stealth games may wish to be a thief, and so on.

As the AD&D® game is, first and foremost, a fantasy game, the DM should be lenient when assigning stats, classes, and levels. There is no sense in hurting someone’s feelings in the interest of what the DM perceives as accurate.

Other groups—usually of the more mature variety—may be a little more honest about their abilities and limitations. If players can be trusted to have realistic views of themselves, let them establish their own stats and abilities.

Players can be of any class. A strong player who has boxed or engaged in martial arts can be a fighter. A player who is especially stealthy, small, or quiet could be a thief, while a singer could be a bard.

Player PCs should not start out as wizards, as there is no such profession in the modern world. Particularly intelligent players may be able to start out as wizards, but without spells, spellbooks, or spellcasting abilities. These will have to be learned from NPC teachers in the new world.

Player PCs could also start out as zero-level characters, allow themselves to develop, and choose their classes later.

PCs as Animals

Humans, elves, dwarves, gnomes—have you ever considered expanding the range of character possibilities beyond the realm of the so-called “intelligent” races? Allow the players to portray animals for a change of pace.

The notion of role-playing an animal may seem silly at first, but think of the many examples in literature—Richard Adams’ *Watership Down* and *The Plague Dogs*, and Brian Jacques’ *Redwall* trilogy are just a few. In some cases (such as the Adams books), the animals are familiar ones—quadrupeds with no hands, who must struggle to survive in a human-dominated world. In other stories, the animals exist in a world of intelligent animals who can walk, talk, and fight in the same manner as humans, but retain the animals’ social orders and systems.

Either of these circumstances makes for a challenging roleplaying experience. PCs could be transformed into animals or transported to a world where animals rule. They would be forced to familiarize themselves with their new bodies and survive in the new world. PC animals may also be generated from scratch.

When converting an ordinary PC into an animal, try choosing an animal appropriate to

the character's class and abilities. A fighter might become a bear, wolf, or puma; a thief might become a rat or mole; a wizard might become an owl or cat, and so on. Inventing an animal that is diametrically opposed to the original character is another possibility—a mighty fighter could find himself in the body of a mouse or vole.

Statistic conversion is not as hard as it might immediately seem. Wisdom, intelligence, constitution, and dexterity could remain unchanged. Strength may be reduced or increased according to the size of the animal, or may be kept the same relative to other animals. Charisma should apply only to interactions with animals of the same species, with a subtraction for other species depending on their natural relationship (a deer will have a hard time using charisma to dissuade a wolf from attacking, for example).

Adventures for the new group of animals can take a number of routes—exploration and search for a new home, a quest to regain the PCs' original bodies (what happened to those bodies in the meantime?), or defending the woodland against invaders—human, animal, or supernatural. As noted, adventuring with PCs in animal form is not something suitable for long-term campaigning, and should probably not go on for more than a half-dozen sessions or so.

PCs as Kids

Who says all PCs have to be adults? Everyone was a kid once, and the obvious limitations and challenges of role-playing child PCs can lead to some very interesting (and occasionally frustrating) gaming.

One option is for characters to start out as kids. In this case, they will be zero-level PCs, and the campaign can follow them as they grow up and develop into full-fledged AD&D® game characters.

Existing PCs can easily be turned into chil-

dren by means of a curse, magic, or an artifact, in which case they will have to find a way to return to normal. (This assumes, of course, that they want to; some people would see the chance to start over again with an adult's experience and knowledge as a blessing, rather than a curse!).

Normal child PCs will have reduced statistics. Strength, wisdom, and dexterity will be lower (the younger the child, the lower the stat), and will have, at best, 1d4 hit points. Children will probably be nonclassed, zero-level characters without spellcasting abilities. They might be allowed a few thief abilities such as Climb Walls or Hide in Shadows.

You can allow transformed or cursed PCs to retain their adult-level wisdom and spellcasting abilities if you wish, although the sight of a little girl casting a *fireball* at a horde of orcs may give nearby adults pause.

The social limitations of childhood are another problem—PCs will be unable to swagger into a tavern and demand ale, and adults tend to frown upon ten-year-olds venturing into a dungeon or wilderness area.

Other Ideas—Use Your Imagination!

Nothing written above (or in this entire book, for that matter) is carved in stone. The purpose of this work is to encourage *Creative Campaigning*. Use the ideas presented here as jumping-off places for development of your own alternative campaigns.

Try combining ideas—set the African cultural campaign in the Cavalier period, for example. Or, better yet, research and develop campaigns set in historical periods or cultures not discussed in this book. Go to the library, read books and magazines on history and anthropology, adapt your favorite fantasy novel, or delve into your own imagination—developing a setting for your campaign that is different from any other is one of the greatest joys of DMing.



This chapter holds numerous story ideas for the DM to read and expand into full-blown adventures. Use these ideas as springboards to send your imagination soaring.

This chapter is divided into three main sections.

- **Master Outline:** An outline the DM can use to design original adventures. Two scenarios—"Strange Renaissance" and "Carnival of the Bizarre"—are presented as examples.
- **Grave Plots:** Adventure ideas to spark imagination. Use the Master Outline to develop them further.
- **Random Encounter Generator:** A system of tables to help create memorable NPCs and encounters.

The Master Outline

Once the DM invents a fun idea, the Master Outline can be used to develop the concept into a playable adventure. By filling each section of the outline with logical and creative material, a story will be virtually ready to play.

The various sections of the Master Outline are described below.

Master Outline

- I. Story Summary
 1. Setting
 2. Characters
 3. Plot
 4. Subplots
- II. Story Structure
 1. Exposition
 2. Development
 3. Climax
 4. Denouement
 5. Rewards

Story Summary: This large section provides a brief summary of the adventure with regard to background, setting, characters, plot, and subplots.

Setting: The locations of the adventures should be given careful consideration. Is the concept best suited as a wilderness, dungeon, or city adventure? Does it involve a combination of these?

Characters: Consider the number and levels of player characters taking part in the adventure. Be careful that the challenge is not too difficult or too easy for the PCs. Details concerning nonplayer characters in the adventure should be outlined in this section.

Plot: List the various objectives the PCs might attempt during the story, and how they might accomplish those objectives.

Subplots: To add depth to adventures, it is wise to have stories within the main story—subplots. Such side adventures may seem to take the PCs off the track, but should help develop the main story. Subplots should be tailored to the personal goals of the PCs.

Story Structure: This is the heart of the story, further defining the plot and breaking it into manageable chunks: exposition, development, climax, denouement, and rewards.

Exposition: Each adventure should begin with an exposition that introduces the players to the setting and circumstances of the story. Through hints about the main conflict or objective of the adventure, the players should become curious enough to proceed with the story.

The exposition often involves an introductory encounter with a friendly or victimized NPC who relates information to the PCs. This information is best presented as answers to the PCs' questions, not as a long speech read by the DM. Sometimes this involves giving the players maps, letters, official documents, or other handouts.

Exposition can also occur as a combat encounter with hostile NPCs. This quickly

gets the PCs involved, and can be an exciting start to the adventure. The attackers should reveal information during the battle, after being captured and questioned, or carry a clue (such as a map or letter) in their belongings.

Development: After exposition, the story develops through a number of encounters in which the story escalates until the climax is reached. This enables the players to slowly learn more about the plot, and allows tension to build as the players realize the full extent of the danger they face.

Combat encounters with the main villain's minions can provide useful information—what types of creatures the PCs can expect to face; what motivates the enemies; and how well-trained and equipped they are. Often, combat encounters lead the PCs to the location of the climax.

Noncombat encounters are important and provide the best opportunities for role-playing. Interesting NPCs add flavor to the story and provide clues that should keep the adventurers on the right track. Riddles, notes, or maps can also provide hints.

Not all of the encounters must advance the plot. Random encounters can create an unexpected danger or challenge and give the PCs a chance to flex their muscles in combat. A "Random Encounter Generator" is provided for this very purpose.

Climax: Staging the climax is perhaps the most important part of the adventure. The setting of the climax must be dramatic, including fascinating visual effects or perilous terrain.

The players must feel threatened by the danger their characters face and excited at the chance of overcoming it. The final outcome should always be in question.

In the best situations, the climax should provide several potential solutions to the problem. From the information supplied, the players must realize the solutions and act

upon them. If the players devise a creative solution not considered in the story outline, be flexible and allow them to try it.

As the climax unfolds, remember to consider the intelligence and goals of the villains. The NPCs' tactics should mimic their intelligence and personality. The most clever villains should have the foresight to protect themselves with magical defenses, and possibly an emergency escape route. A villain who has the guile to escape the PCs and return to fight again can be the source of several exciting adventures.

Denouement: Loose ends are tied and questions answered during the denouement (pronounced day-new-MAH). Assuming the adventurers are triumphant, this is a time of relative calm and safety, allowing the PCs the opportunity to gather the treasure of the vanquished villain. They should also discover clues that answer any remaining questions concerning the story. Clues can come from documents (such as the villain's journal) or from captured or rescued NPCs.

Sometimes one of these clues guides the PCs toward their next adventure. This is especially appropriate if the villain of the current adventure is somehow connected to the antagonist of the next story.

Rewards: Take care to preserve balance in the campaign. Not all rewards need be magical items, wealth, or experience points. Information in the form of clues that can be puzzled together is a useful reward in that it advances the story line, answers players' questions, gives solutions to upcoming problems, and warns the PCs about future creatures or traps.

The gratitude or debt of friendly NPCs is also a worthy reward. This is especially true if the NPC holds a position of power, such as a king or high-level spellcaster. The PCs may find themselves needing to call in the debt at a later date.

For some players, simply accomplishing a

difficult task is rewarding enough. This is easy for the DM—simply run adventures that challenge the PCs to perform worthy deeds.

No matter what style of play your group enjoys most, it is up to the DM to become aware of it and try to nourish it. Always remember the one true rule of role-playing: Have fun!

Strange Renaissance

A year ago, the human town of Peaksdell was a prosperous community ruled by Lord Gilbertz II and his elderly father, Lord Gilbertz I. The local silver mine produced enough ore that wealth trickled down through all levels of society—everyone was content.

Then things changed. A series of unexplained accidents claimed the lives of nearly 30 miners. With the remaining miners refusing to work, the silver mine was abandoned and believed to be haunted. The once prosperous town of Peaksdell began to struggle under a poor economy.

As if this were not bad enough, bands of goblins began pillaging and burning farms around the community. The fear of a bad harvest and long winter crept into the hearts of the people of Peaksdell.

On an excursion into the Tanglewood Forest to confront the goblin raiders, Lord Gilbertz II disappeared. His betrothed, Lady Gwenneth, remains in mourning, believing him to be dead. The young lord's venerable father was forced to struggle from his sickbed and renew his former responsibilities.

Though the disappearance of Lord Gilbertz II seems to be simply bad luck, this is not the case. The wizard Cyrus Arcanus has been a trusted advisor of both Lord Gilbertz II and Lord Gilbertz I for many years. However, he is not the concerned ally he appears to be. Cyrus Arcanus desires Lady Gwenneth and the lordship of Peaksdell for his own.

While on the excursion into the Tangle-

wood Forest one year ago with Lord Gilbertz II, Cyrus Arcanus saw his opportunity. He *polymorphed* the warrior into a goblin. The wizard thought Lord Gilbertz II would be discovered and killed by his own men . . . but he was wrong.

Devoid of most of his memories, and not even knowing who he was, Lord Gilbertz II evaded his own soldiers and wandered farther into the dark woods. He soon encountered the goblins of King Gorash, warned them of the approaching soldiers, and even masterminded a brilliant ambush that wiped out 20 of his loyal men-at-arms! Cyrus Arcanus barely escaped. Killing the soldiers saddened and confused the ill-fated lord even more. For his cunning and help, Lord Gilbertz II was accepted into the tribe. He was given the goblin name Rask-Nok, meaning "Smart Warrior."

Because of his exceptional intelligence and combat prowess, Rask-Nok soon became a rival of King Gorash. Realizing he would eventually be challenged by Rask-Nok, and would likely lose, King Gorash banished him from the tribe rather than face him in mortal combat.

The most intelligent goblins of the tribe also recognized Rask-Nok's exceptional talents, and chose to leave with him. Rask-Nok displayed strange customs which intrigued his goblin followers. They imitated their leader's behavior: the goblins began bathing, wearing fine clothes, using eating utensils properly, speaking politely, and learning to read and write.

Rask-Nok led his "renaissance goblins" to the silver mine. Although he knew not why, Rask-Nok felt that the mine was important to the people of Peaksdell and wanted to atone for killing the soldiers. Rask-Nok also wanted his goblins to be accepted into human society. He and his goblins began shoring up the mine and producing silver ore—all the while, practicing the customs of humans.

Recently, Rask-Nok dispatched one of his followers with a message for Lord Gilburtz I in the hope of establishing an alliance between his goblins and the humans. This strangely polite goblin messenger draws the PCs into the adventure.

Setting

This adventure takes place in and around any small border town, but preferably one along the rugged outskirts of a large kingdom or empire ruled by humans. A town near a dark forest is best.

The names *Peaksdell* and *Tanglewood Forest* may be changed to suit the individual campaign world.

The townsfolk of Peaksdell are mostly merchants, craftsmen, farmers, herdsman, and unemployed miners. The majority of citizens are human.

Atop a hill on the outskirts of Peaksdell stands the stronghold of Lord Gilburtz I. It is a small castle called Graywatch. The lord, his family, loyal knights, and men-at-arms reside here.

Rask-Nok and his renaissance goblins live in a wooden stockade built atop a long, low hill. At the base of the hill is the entrance to the abandoned silver mine.

The scheming wizard Cyrus Arcanus resides at Graywatch Castle, but he also operates a secret laboratory within a mound of earth and stone near the heart of Tanglewood Forest. The townsfolk know of the eerie mound, though they do not know the wizard visits there. It is rumored in Peaksdell that a coven of witches built the mound long ago. Who knows what dangers lie in the dungeon below?

The goblins of King Gorash dwell in the Tanglewood forest also. Their lair is part of a series of treacherous caverns rumored to extend to the very bottom of the world.

Characters

This adventure is best suited for a party of 4-6 player characters of levels 3-4.

Following are the most important NPCs and creatures, listed in alphabetical order.

Cavalry (20), 0-level human fighters: AL LN; AC 6; MV 11; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long sword) or 1-6 (javelin); ML 15.

Each member of the cavalry of Graywatch Castle is equipped with ring mail, a medium shield, three javelins, a long sword, and a medium war horse.

Evil Goblins (300): Int Low; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 3 average; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 2-7 (mace) or 1-6 (short bow); SZ S; ML 10, XP 15.

These creatures are typical goblins—small, dirty humanoids with a distinctly evil nature. They have yellow skin and red eyes.

Infantry (100), 0-level human fighters: AL LN; AC 6, MV 11; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (halberd) or 1-6 (short sword); ML 15.

Each member of the infantry of Graywatch Castle is equipped with scale mail, a halberd, and a short sword.

King Gorash, goblin chief: Int Average; AL LE; AC 4; MV 6; HD 2; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 3-8 (*mace* +1) or 1-6 (short sword); SZ S; ML 10; XP 35.

The goblin king is a vile creature who gained his position in the tribe (and maintains it) through intimidation and murder. King Gorash despises Rask-Nok (Lord Gilburtz II) and the renaissance goblins, who were formerly members of Gorash's tribe. The goblin chief wants to force these goblins back under his control.

King Gorash has had dealings with Cyrus Arcanus. In exchange for helping the wizard

gain control of Peaksdel, King Gorash will share in the wealth of the silver mine. However, the goblin chief cannot be trusted. At the first opportunity, he will double-cross the wizard in an attempt to destroy the town and take the mine for himself.

Knights (10), 1st level human fighters: AL LN; AC 1; MV 7; hp 12, 10, 9, 9, 9, 8, 8, 7, 7, 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (long sword) or 2-8 (morning star); ML 16.

The knights are an elite fighting unit. They wear field plate and wield large shields and long swords or morning stars. When riding their heavy war horses (with full barding), they also wield lances. Sir Hawklin is their immediate superior.

Lady Gwenneth, 3rd level human wizard: AL LG; AC 9; MV 12; hp 10; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4 (dagger); ML 12; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 17, Wiz 13, Cha 12.

Spells: *armor, magic missile, mirror image.*

Magical Items: None.

Gwenneth is 23 years old and very beautiful. Lady Gwenneth deeply loves Lord Gilbertz II, but believes him to be dead. To mourn him, she wears a black gown and veil. The lady carries a dagger concealed in her clothing.

Lady Gwenneth is the ward of Lord Gilbertz I, who plans to betroth her to Cyrus Arcanus. She would rather die.

Lord Gilbertz I, 11th level human fighter: AL LG; AC 3; MV 12; hp 42; THAC0 10, #AT 3/2; Dmg 4-11 (long sword +3); ML 17; Str 10, Dex 8, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Magical Items: *bracers of defense AC 3, long sword +3.*

Lord Gilbertz I is 63 years old. He is recovering from a long illness, and is quite thin and pale. The wise old warrior wears a silk robe and silver crown.

He is a proud man who still mourns the

loss of his only son. The venerable warrior has grown weary of lordship, and is turning more and more of his authority over to Cyrus Arcanus.

Lord Gilbertz II (Rask-Nok): 9th level human (goblin) fighter: AL LG; AC 5; MV 12; hp 63; THAC0 12; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-6 (short sword); ML 18; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Magical Items: None. All were lost when he was *polymorphed* into a goblin one year ago.

He is 26 years old, and currently a goblin named Rask-Nok. Even so, he retains his noble bearing and good nature. However, he does not remember his true identity or how he came to become a goblin. As far as he knows, he really is a goblin who likes humans and wants to be accepted into their society.

Rask-Nok wears fine clothes and goblin-sized leather armor. He wields a short sword and carries a small wooden shield.

Renaissance Goblins (50): Int Average; AL LG; AC 6; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 3 average; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (short sword) or 1-6 (short bow); SZ S; ML 10; XP 15.

These goblins are the curious followers of Rask-Nok. They believe their leader's unusual customs (namely human customs) represent a bright future for all goblinkind. Rejecting the filthy tunnels of their warren and the harsh rules of King Gorash, these goblins left their tribe to start a new life.

Renaissance goblins bathe regularly, wear flamboyant clothing, use eating utensils, and speak politely. Even so, it is a constant effort for them to keep their true goblin habits in check.

Sir Hawklin, 5th level human fighter: AL LN, AC 1; MV 10; hp 38, THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 4-11 (*battle axe* +2); ML 17; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Sir Hawklin has been Lord Gilbertz II's

adventuring companion for several years. When the young lord returned home to take over for his ailing father, Sir Hawklin accompanied him. The warrior is the captain of the men-at arms of the castle.

Sir Hawklin is a good soldier who follows orders without question. He does not trust Cyrus Arcanus, but respects the wizard's authority.

The captain of the guard wears field plate and a medium shield. He wields a *battle axe* +2 given to him by Lord Gilbertz II.

Cyrus Arcanus, 10th level human wizard: AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg *staff of striking* or by spell; ML 15; Str 9, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Spells: *armor, burning hands, magic missile, wall of fog, blur, hypnotic pattern, levitate, mirror image, blink, dispel magic, slow, polymorph other, wall of fire, animate dead, shadow door.*

Magical Items: *ring of protection* +2, *cloak of protection* +2, *potion of human control*, *staff of striking* (18 charges).

Cyrus Arcanus is tall and thin. He is immaculately clean, well-dressed, and polite. The wizard has a habit of pulling at his heavily oiled, black beard.

Cyrus Arcanus desires the lordship of Peaksdell and Lady Gwenneth for himself. He will go to great lengths to accomplish his goals. However, though he presents a powerful exterior, the wizard is really a coward at heart.

Worgs (50): Int Low; AL NE; AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 14 average; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SZ M; ML 11; XP 120

A worg is an evil wolf as large as a pony. These worgs are ridden as mounts by King Gorash and his tribe of goblins.

Plot

There are numerous objectives the PCs can accomplish during this story.

- Discover the true identity of Rask-Nok. This information is in Cyrus Arcanus's journal in his secret laboratory within the Tanglewood Forest.
- Restore Rask-Nok to his true human form as Lord Gilbertz II. Lady Gwenneth has been in mourning for nearly a year. On the anniversary of Lord Gilbertz II's disappearance, she will remove her black veil and become betrothed to Cyrus Arcanus. If this is allowed to occur, Lord Gilbertz II will always remain a goblin. If the ceremony is stopped, the lord returns to his true form.
- Thwart the schemes of Cyrus Arcanus. Even if the PCs fail to stop the betrothal, they can defeat the wizard by revealing his evil plot.
- Defeat the evil goblins. King Gorash and his tribe must eventually be overcome. The PCs can explore the caverns and defeat the goblin king.
- Help forge an alliance between goblins and humans. If King Gorash is defeated, the PCs might persuade the remaining goblins to join Rask-Nok's renaissance goblins and help at the mine. Goblins are talented miners, and can help the humans overcome their previous troubles at the silver mine.
- Investigate the "haunted" mine. Perhaps the silver mine really is haunted. The PCs might be asked to solve the problem.
- Investigate the dungeon beneath Cyrus's laboratory. Various legends are told in the taverns of Peaksdell about the ancient dungeon beneath the witches' mound. Some believe it is the source of the evil that seems to permeate the entire forest. Perhaps the witches were responsible... maybe they are still there.

Subplots

A DM can “personalize” the adventure by adding one or more subplots regarding the goals of the PCs. Following are a few suggestions. Develop them further by considering the backgrounds and desires of the adventurers in the group.

- One of the PCs is a distant relative of Lady Gwenneth. Previously, she dispatched a letter to the PC inviting him or her and friends to attend the betrothal ceremony. In truth, Lady Gwenneth is suspicious of Cyrus Arcanus and wants the PCs to investigate him and the disappearance of Lord Gilburtz II
- As a reward in a previous adventure, the PCs gain a bit of scribbled parchment—an old deed to the silver mine granting owner-

ship to the bearer! The PCs are likely to come to Peaksdel to claim the mine. This brings them directly into the struggle; Lord Gilburtz I considers the mine to be his, Rask-Nok occupies the mine, and Cyrus Arcanus wants it also.

- One of the party’s wizards needs information from Cyrus Arcanus. Perhaps the PC has heard that Cyrus Arcanus knows a spell the player character wants to learn. Maybe the PC needs information about a magical item that Cyrus Arcanus is said to have created. In return, Cyrus asks a favor—kill Rask-Nok!
- A miner killed in a suspicious accident at the silver mine was a friend or relative of a PC. The dead man’s family asks the adventurers to investigate. Perhaps the miner’s tormented spirit lurks in the mine. Was his death really an accident? Did he know too



much? The ghost might reveal valuable clues about the main adventure if the PCs promise to give his remains a proper burial.

Story Structure

As detailed below, “Strange Renaissance” should develop through six episodes before reaching the climax. Episode One is the exposition.

Exposition

Episode One: The PCs travel the road to Peaksdell. It is best if this scene occurs at night, with the adventurers camped or staying at an inn near the road.

The baying of wolves and the tread of a galloping horse attract the PCs’ attention. A renaissance goblin named Tresk-Rok pulls his pony to a stop before the PCs. The goblin wears fine clothes and a floppy hat. His pony is well groomed and attired with a stylish bridle and new blanket. Both the goblin and pony are injured—several small black arrows protrude from each. In the darkness, Tresk-Rok might be mistaken for a well-dressed gnome.

Tresk-Rok is dying. With his last gasps, he says, “Good people, my wounds are most grievous. I beg of you, please convey this parcel to Lord Gilburtz of Peaksdell!” The goblin gives the PCs a parchment wrapped around a rock. A wide vein of silver runs through the rock. The parchment is an offer of allegiance from Rask-Nok to Lord Gilburtz I, and the silver ore is proof of the goblins’ success at the mine. The DM might write this note and give it to the players as a handout. Remember that Rask-Nok is a very intelligent goblin—his letter is polite and well written.

Just as Tresk-Rok hands over the parchment, the baying of wolves shocks the PCs into alertness. Ten normal goblins riding worgs charge the adventurers. Stress to the

players that these goblins are much different from Tresk-Rok—they are foul, slobbering monsters intent on killing and robbing the PCs.

Development

The following episodes are the *most likely* way the story will unfold. Of course, the players may decide to go about things differently. For example, they might decide to visit Rask-Nok at the silver mine or track the evil goblins of King Gorash before taking the parchment to Lord Gilburtz I at Peaksdell. Be prepared to improvise!

Episode Two: The story continues when the PCs arrive at Peaksdell. Stress the poverty and discontent present in the town. Because the mine has been abandoned, everyone is suffering. Unemployed miners frequent the taverns, spending the last of their money and quarreling.

After the PCs have explored the town and learned more about the situation, they should take the parchment and rock to Lord Gilburtz I at the castle. He meets with them in the great hall. Lady Gwenneth and Cyrus Arcanus are present also. Be sure to describe the NPCs to the players.

Lord Gilburtz I excuses himself to ponder the message. This gives the PCs the chance to speak with Lady Gwenneth or Cyrus Arcanus. When the lord returns, he presents the PCs with a sealed envelope and asks them to take the letter to Rask-Nok at the silver mine.

Episode Three: If the PCs accept the task, they are ambushed on the way to the mine by a drunken mob of 15 angry miners. Earlier (in disguise), Cyrus Arcanus confronted the miners, plied them with drink, and convinced them that the PCs were on their way to give a “writ of ownership” of the mine to the goblins. The wizard fears his plans will be thwarted if the lord forms an alliance with

Rask-Nok. He wants the letter and the PCs eliminated.

The miners are drunk and angry, but they are not evil people. The PCs should try to talk their way out of the situation, rather than slay the villagers. By explaining that the message they carry is simply a letter from Lord Gilbertz I, the PCs can calm the mob. The miners do not know that Cyrus Arcanus is the one who convinced them to ambush the PCs. However, they can give a description that vaguely resembles the wizard.

If the PCs should read the message, they find it to be very diplomatic and vague. Lord Gilbertz I presents veiled threats about his ownership of the mine, but leaves room for negotiation with the renaissance goblins if they can stop the evil goblins from raiding the humans.

Episode Four: The PCs meet Rask-Nok and his tribe of renaissance goblins. Stress the strange behavior of these goblins—they are clean, well dressed, and polite.

The PCs will likely ask Rask-Nok questions about his background. He tells them as much as possible, but remembers nothing prior to meeting the evil goblins in the woods one year ago. He says that sometimes he feels like he is someone else. Rask-Nok confesses that he has a liking for human culture, which is very odd for a goblin indeed.

Rask-Nok reveals that the evil goblins are led by King Gorash. He states that his scouts have recently seen the goblin king visiting a strange mound of earth and stone in Tanglewood Forest (Cyrus Arcanus's lab). Rask-Nok guesses that the activities at the mound are the reason the goblins have become more aggressive. He warns that King Gorash's tribe seems to be preparing for war.

Rask-Nok suggests that he and the PCs investigate the mound. Ten of Rask-Nok's renaissance goblins accompany them.

Episode Five: The PCs, Rask-Nok, and 10 renaissance goblins travel through Tangle-

wood Forest toward the strange mound. Some encounters with evil goblins or other denizens of the dark wood would be appropriate as the party travels.

The mound is exactly that—a hump of earth and stone covered by gray moss and stunted, dead trees. Precisely how the mound is laid out and what awaits within is up to the DM. Develop some magical traps, tricks, and guardians to challenge players. Perhaps the entrance is disguised by a *hallucinatory terrain* spell. Maybe the animated skeletons of forest animals and monsters are buried under the moss, just waiting for intruders to come along so they can rise up and defend the mound. Perhaps the moss itself is some new type of monster.

After defeating the traps and guardians of the wizard's lab, the PCs can search the place. In addition to whatever they discover, they find Cyrus Arcanus's journal. The book reveals the wizard's schemes to wed Lady Gwenneth, take over the lordship of Peaksdell, and use the evil goblins of King Gorash to keep the humans in line.

The journal also reveals how the wizard *polymorphed* Lord Gilbertz II into a goblin. The book states that when the gong strikes twelve on the first anniversary of Lord Gilbertz II's transformation, and Lady Gwenneth becomes betrothed to Cyrus Arcanus, the hapless lord will remain a goblin forever. If the betrothal does not occur, Lord Gilbertz II will become human once again.

Obviously, this *polymorph* spell is a bit different from that described in the *Player's Handbook*. In effect, it is a type of *curse*. However, it cannot be dispelled or removed—only preventing the betrothal ceremony will restore Lord Gilbertz II. And the ceremony is to take place that very night!

Episode Six: The PCs and Rask-Nok must hurry to Peaksdell to stop the betrothal. Encounters on the way will add drama and delays. Because he is a goblin, getting Rask-

Nok past the town guards could make for an interesting encounter.

Climax

The sense of drama should be heightened as the PCs near the climax. Time is of the essence. Perhaps they hear a gong in one of the castle towers beginning to strike midnight, just as Sir Hawklin challenges their entry into the great hall.

Allow the PCs a chance to talk their way inside. If they fail, Rask-Nok convinces Sir Hawklin that he is Lord Gilbertz II by revealing something only the young lord knows about his friend. For example, on his 17th birthday, Sir Hawklin received a scar on a hunting trip with Lord Gilbertz II.

The ceremony is a solemn affair. There are no decorations or happy spectators. Only Lord Gilbertz I, Lady Gwenneth, and Cyrus Arcanus are here, along with the 10 court knights who act as witnesses. The old lord conducts the ceremony, which consists merely of removing the lady's black veil and stating that she is now betrothed to Cyrus Arcanus.

If the players have played intelligently—quickly discovering the true identity of Rask-Nok, skillfully avoiding delays, and hurrying to the great hall—their characters arrive just as Lord Gilbertz I is about to remove the veil.

If the players have not done well, they show up just as the ceremony is completed. Lord Gilbertz II will always remain a goblin. However, the PCs can still reveal the treachery of Cyrus Arcanus, which nullifies Lady Gwenneth's betrothal to the wizard.

As his first action during the encounter, Cyrus Arcanus drinks his *potion of human control*. Assume that he automatically *charms* the 10 knights. Allow main characters, such as Lord Gilbertz I, Lady Gwenneth, Sir Hawklin, and the PCs to attempt saving throws vs. spell. As only humans may be affected, Rask-Nok is immune to the potion. *Charmed* charac-

ters must attack Rask-Nok and any PCs who were not affected.

After the first round of combat, the gong finishes striking midnight. If the ceremony was not completed, Rask-Nok suddenly transforms into Lord Gilbertz II. If he has enough levels of control left from the potion, Cyrus Arcanus now attempts to *charm* Lord Gilbertz II.

At this point, the progress of the rest of the encounter is up to the DM. If Cyrus is losing, he may attempt to escape with Lady Gwenneth as a hostage. As a twist, he may simply weep and beg forgiveness! "The hags of the mound forced this treachery upon me," he moans.

For maximum drama, consider that King Gorash and his tribesmen have been digging a secret tunnel beneath the castle for months. The goblin king has chosen this night to double-cross the wizard. A portion of the floor caves in, and King Gorash and dozens of his goblins pour out. The rest of the goblin tribe attacks the castle and town from outside. A full-scale siege erupts!

Denouement

If the PCs have been successful, Rask-Nok is Lord Gilbertz II once again. He is reunited with Lady Gwenneth and his father.

For the players, the main goal of helping Lord Gilbertz II become human again and thwarting Cyrus Arcanus has likely been resolved. But many questions remain.

How will the renaissance goblins react to Rask-Nok's transformation? Will they follow a human leader? Will they revert to their evil ways? Or will they continue to strive for an alliance with the humans and help them at the mine? How will the human miners react? Perhaps the PCs can act as liaisons between the goblins and humans to devise a compromise.

What about King Gorash and the evil gob-

lins? Were they destroyed during the climax, or are they still a threat lurking in Tanglewood Forest?

What about the hags Cyrus Arcanus mentioned during the climax? Was he lying, or not? Was the wizard truly the main villain, or simply the puppet of some greater evil?

Answering any of these questions involves an entire adventure of its own. If the PCs intend to pursue them, they should take time to recover from their wounds and gather more information in Peaksdel. They will be allowed to stay as guests at the castle. Perhaps a lively celebration of Lord Gilbertz II's return, and possibly even a wedding, is in order.

Rewards

Assuming they were successful, the PCs have gained the gratitude of both lords of the castle. However, the coffers are low due to the closing of the mine. If the PCs want a monetary reward, they receive 5,000 silver pieces each.

A more useful request might be to reserve the right of asking Lord Gilbertz II a favor at a later date. Who knows what trouble the lord can help them out of in the future?

If Cyrus Arcanus has been killed, the PCs may take his possessions. They may also have found treasure at the wizard's secret laboratory.

If the PCs successfully accomplished the main story goal of helping Lord Gilbertz II become human, you may give them a bonus of 2,500 experience points each. For completing each subplot, a reward of 1,000 experience points is suggested.

Carnival of the Bizarre

An evil scheme is brewing and bubbling to a head—a deadly scheme whose foundations were laid many years ago by an entity impris-

oned in the chaotic depths of a distant plane of existence. To free itself, the entity must steal the life force from hundreds of humans and demihumans.

The DM must decide exactly who this entity is. Choose a suitably evil and chaotic deity from a mythos of the PCs' home game world. The DM might even create a new deity, one that has been magically imprisoned for thousands of years and is now making his or her presence known. Perhaps this evil deity's priests and followers have been persecuted over the years, and have been forced to perform their rites secretly.

To gather the life force it needs, the entity caused the *chaos crystal* (see below) to be discovered by an elf named Laxantri. The elf became the puppet of the insane deity. Using the powers of the crystal, Laxantri created the Carnival of the Bizarre.

All of the sideshow oddities and attractions of the carnival are the result of the chaotic magic of the *chaos crystal*. Laxantri, now known as the Ringmaster, uses the carnival as a means to draw victims to him. Those who visit the carnival either wind up as attractions themselves, or are killed horribly so their life force might feed the entity.

At the time the PCs enter the story, the carnival is visiting a small village. Soon, the carnival will move on to a nearby city, where hundreds of hapless victims await. The adventurers must put a stop to this scheme and destroy the *chaos crystal*.

The Chaos Crystal

The *chaos crystal* is a minor artifact with a very specific purpose—to drain and store the life force of sentient beings. Review the section on artifacts and relics in Chapter 10 of the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide* to learn more about artifacts.

The following information about the *chaos crystal* can be altered to better suit the cam-

paign or the specific deity chosen to be the evil entity.

Appearance: The artifact is a crystal cluster roughly 3" in diameter, and is worn around the neck by a chain of tiny obsidian links. Its form is always shifting—some crystal shards of the formation shrink, while others grow and twist. Its color oscillates from bright yellow to blood red. Looking at this chaotic mass of crystal and light is disquieting to say the least.

History: The *chaos crystal* was created several millennia ago by the evil entity just prior to the being's imprisonment. Foreseeing its coming doom, the entity sent the crystal out across the planes of existence to gather life force energy. Soon, the being will have the energy it needs to break free of its prison.

The artifact has surfaced on many worlds, causing considerable mayhem and destruction throughout the ages. Some scholars believe it was the magic of the *chaos crystal* that created such exotic and evil races as the tasloi, yuan-ti, and urds.

Alignment: This artifact is firmly identified as chaotic evil.

Minor Powers: The wearer of the artifact can call upon the following powers three times per day. All are considered to be cast at the 12th level of ability.

- *Charm monster.*
- *Charm person.*
- *Confusion* affecting those who view the oscillating colors and shapes of the *chaos crystal*.
- *Polymorph self.*

Major Powers: The wearer may use the following powers three times per day. Both are considered to be cast at the 20th level of ability.

- *Finger of death:* Rather than being snuffed out, the victim's life force is stored in the *chaos crystal*.

- *Alter other:* This effect is similar to the *alter self* spell. However, up to 12 individuals may be affected per use. There is no saving throw, and the duration is permanent. Should the artifact be destroyed, *altered* creatures return to normal. It is with this power that the Ringmaster has created the oddities for the Carnival of the Bizarre.

Dangers: There are several dangers inherent in using the *chaos crystal*:

- Over the span of 3d4 days, the wearer's alignment shifts to chaotic evil.
- Each time a major power is used, the wearer must succeed at a saving throw vs. spell or become the artifact's puppet (and is effectively an NPC controlled by the DM). If this occurs, the crystal fuses itself into the victim's flesh, spreading crystalline tendrils in a chaotic pattern across the wearer's chest. The artifact can be removed only upon the wearer's death.

Corrupting Effect: A wearer who has not yet become the artifact's puppet becomes suspicious of others and possessive of the item. This paranoia eventually leads the wearer to turn upon his or her most trusted allies, believing them to be schemers out to steal the artifact.

Weakness: The *chaos crystal* is impervious to normal harm and magical attacks. However, by washing it with the tears of a pious woman, the artifact can be destroyed.

Setting

This story can unfold near any city. The story begins in a small village near the city.

Characters

This adventure is designed for a party of 4-6 player characters of levels 7-8.

The following are the most important NPCs and creatures of the story, presented in alphabetical order

Arinna the Pilgrim, 5th level human cleric: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; hp 32; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (quarterstaff) or by spell; ML 16; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 8, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 17

Spells: *bless, cure light wounds, protection from evil, remove fear, sanctuary; aid, barkskin, good berry; prayer.*

Magical Items: None

Arinna is a devout woman making a long and tiresome pilgrimage. She is of average height and looks, but quite thin due to her wearying travels

Dancing Dogs (4 Hell Hounds): Int Low; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 4, 5, 6, 7; hp 25, 36, 42, 50; THAC0 17, 15, 15, 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (bite);

SA breathe fire; SD immune to fire, 50% chance to see hidden or invisible creatures; SZ M; ML 13; XP 270, 420, 659, 975. These hell hounds have been *altered* to appear as poodles with pink fur and oversized teeth. They are trained to perform a number of acrobatic tricks.

Fire-Eater, 3rd level human fighter: AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10 (fire breath) or 1-4 (dagger); ML 16; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 11

Magical Items: None

Fire-Eater has been *altered*—his skin is so blackened and tough it grants him a natural Armor Class of 7 and makes him impervious to normal fire. By gulping and spitting a special alcohol mixture, Fire-Eater can belch flames up to 10 feet to strike a single target for 1-10 points of damage. He carries enough of the mixture to spit fire 10 times



Gnomes of the Moon (13), 3rd level gnome thieves: AL CE; AC 6; MV 6; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (short sword) or 1d4 (dagger) or 1d4 (sling); SA backstabx2; SD +3 save vs. magic, *blink* ability; ML 17; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 10; PP 60%, OL 40%, F/RT 30%, MS 65%, HS 55%, DN 25%, CW 65%.

Magical Items: None.

These gnomes have been *altered* to have yellow-green skin, canine snouts, and floppy ears. They look exactly alike, and even have the same attributes. Wearing baggy, flamboyant clothes, they are quite curious to see.

Gnomes of the Moon possess a special innate *blink* ability. They can instantly teleport up to 30 feet away with no chance of error, and even appear behind opponents.

Greater Guardian Daemon: Int High; AL NE; AC -1; MV 9, Fl 9; HD 10; hp 66; THAC0 10; #AT 3; Dmg 1-10/1-12/1-12; SA breathe fire for 7d6 damage (save for half), make *suggestion* once per round; SD immune to fire, cold, and weapons of less than +2 bonus, and *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, *polymorph*, and *fear* spells; MR 25%; SZ L; ML 18; XP 11,000.

As an act of self-preservation, the *chaos crystal* has the power to open a *gate* and summon the guardian daemon. The creature appears as a 9-foot-tall winged bear with ram horns on its head and eagle talons for hands.

Jibbly the Jester, 4th level gnome illusionist/5th level thief: AL CE; AC 7; MV 6; hp 18; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger) or by spell; SA backstab x 3; SD +3 save vs. magic; ML 14; Str 7, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 12; PP 55%, OL 55%, F/RT 45%, MS 60%, HS 50%, DN 35%, CW 65%, RL 10%.

Magical Items: None.

Like the other entertainers of the carnival, Jibbly has been *altered*. His nose is outrageously long, drooping down past his chin. His skin and hair are bright orange.

Jibbly despises the Ringmaster, and secretly covets the *chaos crystal*. He will aid the PCs to get the artifact.

Jugglers of Doom (4), 3rd level human fighters: AL CE; AC 6; MV 12; hp 20 each, THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6 (juggler's clubs); ML 16; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 10.

Magical Items: None.

The jugglers are *altered* to look exactly alike, and even have the same characteristics and abilities. They are incredibly thin, bald, and stand 6 feet 6 inches tall. Each has four unnaturally long and dextrous arms.

Laxantri the Ringmaster, 7th level elf fighter/7th level wizard: AL CE; AC 2; MV 12; hp 50; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-6+3 or by spell; ML 16; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Spells: *burning hands*, *charm person*, *friends*, *hypnotism*, *glitterdust*, *mirror image*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*, *Melf's minute meteors*, *slow*, *rainbow pattern*

Magical Items: *quarterstaff* +3, *elven chain mail*, *wand of wonder* (21 charges), and the *chaos crystal* (embedded in his chest).

Before discovering the artifact, Laxantri was a lawful good adventurer. He is now the evil puppet of the *chaos crystal*.

Laxantri is of average height and weight. However, he has undergone some changes due to exposure to the artifact—his skin and hair are bright green and his eyes are completely black.

Snake-Woman (Medusa): Int Very; AL LE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 6; hp 34; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA petrification, poison; SZ M; ML 14; XP 2,000

Snake-Woman is a medusa who has been *charmed* by the Ringmaster. She uses cards to tell the fortunes of customers at the carnival. Snake-Woman wears a veil covering her entire face—including her deadly eyes—to conceal

her horrid appearance and keep from petrifying unintended victims. The veil does not cover her hair of writhing snakes.

Strong-Man, 7th level human fighter: AL CE; AC 10; MV 12; hp 65; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg 7-8 (punch) or 7 (wrestle); ML 18; Str 18 (00), Dex 12, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 5, Cha 7. **Magical Items:** None.

Strong-Man has been *altered* to be one giant, mean muscle. He stands 6 feet 8 inches tall. His forehead slopes at a dangerous angle, and one of his ears is missing. He looks (and acts) very much like a short ogre.

Plot

There are several objectives the PCs should accomplish during this story:

- Meet Arinna and learn of her pilgrimage to the city.
- Resolve the mystery of the vacant village—Where has everybody gone? To the Carnival of the Bizarre!
- Rescue Jibby the jester at the carnival (he becomes a useful, though temporary, ally).
- While exploring the carnival, the PCs are affected by the *alter other* power of the artifact. To restore themselves, they must defeat the Ringmaster and destroy the *chaos crystal*. To ruin the artifact, they must wash it in the tears of a pious woman—Arinna the pilgrim.
- To find Arinna, the PCs must enter the city. However, they are now altered to appear as hideous monsters. Can they find Arinna without killing innocent city guards, who believe the adventurers to be monsters?
- Finally, the PCs must defeat the artifact's guardian.

Story Structure

As detailed in the following text, "Carnival of the Bizarre" should grow through five episodes before reaching the climax.

Exposition

Episode One: The story begins with the adventurers approaching the village near sunset. As the PCs walk through the village, describe to the players how the place seems abandoned: businesses are closed, there is no one about, a horse wanders down the road with its reins dragging in the dust, a pair of starving dogs squabble over a scrap of food, etc.

The adventurers will likely try to find an inn to get rooms for the night. However, the establishment is closed. Tacked to the door is an advertisement for the carnival. It says something like: "Carnival of the Bizarre! The Ringmaster invites one and all to enjoy the spectacles! Come see Fire-Eater, the man who breathes flame! Witness the awesome might of Strong-Man! Be amazed at the Snake-Woman!"

At the center of town is a well. A haggard woman struggles to pull up a bucket of water. Strapped to her back is a leather harness holding a heavy stone statuette. She is Arinna the pilgrim.

The PCs will likely have several questions for her. The following are the most important questions and answers:

Where is everybody? "I do not know. I just arrived at this village a short while ago. I am very thirsty from my travels. Will you help me draw a bucket of water?"

Who are you? "My name is Arinna. I am making a pilgrimage to the city. There is a beautiful park at the heart of the city, where I will leave this statuette as a gift for all the people. I have carried it for many, many miles with only my faith to sustain me."

Describe to the players how the leather straps and sharp edges of the statue have chafed her skin, raising welts. Obviously, each step she takes is painful.

Can we help you? "Thank you kindly, but no. I must fulfill this pilgrimage alone."

After drinking some cool water and talking with the PCs, the stoop-shouldered pilgrim heads off toward the city. Arinna will not accompany the adventurers into the carnival.

When the PCs make their way to the other side of the village, they find the carnival.

Development

The following episodes are the most likely way the story will unfold. The players might do things differently. For example, they might decide to travel directly to the city, bypassing the carnival. In this case, devise an encounter to get them interested in the carnival. As an example, suppose a terrified little girl runs up to them. "The funny man at the festival made my brother disappear!" she cries. "Please help me find him. I can't find my folks either!"

Episode Two: The PCs investigate the Carnival of the Bizarre. It is a noisy, colorful affair. The PCs notice dozens of villagers wandering about in a daze, apparently stunned by all of the sights and sounds. In truth, they have been *charmed* by the Ringmaster. The villagers care about nothing except entertaining themselves at the fair.

Following are some of the sideshows and events the adventurers might encounter. The DM is encouraged to add more.

Inferno of the Fire-Eater: To breathe fire, the Fire-Eater gulps from a small flask containing a special alcohol mixture. He exhales the liquid, while igniting it with a torch. The alcohol has made the entertainer quite drunk—he breathes fire haphazardly, possibly even striking a PC or other onlooker. He might even ignite a tent!

Horror of the Snake-Woman: A blind dwarf with bleached white skin and hair stands outside this wagon, crying out to onlookers. "Come! Have your fortune told by the Snake-Woman! Only one silver piece!"

Inside, the large wagon is dimly lighted by candles. Behind a table in a shadowy corner sits a mysterious woman wearing a veil covering her entire face. The woman's head is alive with writhing snakes. Next to her stands the statue of an unfortunate villager. His stony face is twisted in an eternal grimace of absolute terror.

Although the Snake-Woman is a medusa, the PCs do not have to fight her. This encounter is mainly to intrigue and frighten the players with the Snake-Woman's fortunes, which are always bleak and ominous.

Dancing with the Dogs: A commotion erupts near the PCs. Yapping dogs and laughter from onlookers draws the adventurers to a strange scene: Four poodles with pink fur bark and snap at a gnome wearing a jester's costume. Strips of bacon have been tied to the poor gnome, who is bleeding from several bites. Makeup runs down Jibbly's face as he cries and yells for help. As the dogs bite at the jester to get the bacon, they dance about on their hind legs and perform backward leaps.

If the PCs try to fend off the dogs, they discover the creatures are not merely hungry poodles, but ravenous hell hounds! Belching fire, the peculiar poodles attack to kill, but flee if their leader (the dog with 7 hit dice) is slain.

After being rescued, Jibbly thanks the PCs with a wink and a flamboyant bow. He then vanishes into the crowd.

Other Oddities: Thirteen of the villagers have been *altered*. They are kept on display in caged wagons. Patrons pay a silver piece to walk through each wagon and view the bizarre creature locked within.

Use your imagination to decide how these poor villagers appear. Perhaps one has a par-

rot's head, while another has fish eyes

Thieves in the Crowd: The Gnomes of the Moon are systematically picking the pockets of people at the carnival. The charmed villagers are easy targets. Allow the PCs to notice a gnome taking the purse of a dazed commoner. Before they can interfere, the gnome *blinks* away. The adventurers may also find themselves the targets of the odd little thieves, all of whom look exactly alike.

Wrestling with Strong-Man: A crowd has formed a ring around Strong-Man. The behemoth cries out, "A hundred gold to anyone who can defeat me in a fair bout of wrestling! Only one gold to challenge me!"

If none of the PCs accepts the challenge, Strong-Man persuades a villager to wrestle. Smiling evilly, Strong-Man quickly overpowers the commoner and proceeds to strangle him. Unless the adventurers interfere, the hapless man is killed.

Should a PC defeat Strong-Man in a bout, the professional wrestler refuses to pay the 100 gp prize. Shrugging his shoulders, Strong-Man says, "I don't have the money. I've never lost before." He then lumbers off to the big top to prepare for the grand finale.

The Grand Finale: This event takes place in the big top at midnight. This gives the PCs plenty of time to explore the rest of the carnival before coming here.

The villagers join the PCs in the big top to watch the show. The Ringmaster introduces the following performers: Strong-Man lifts heavy boulders over his head, Fire-Eater belches flame, the Dancing Dogs (if still alive) jump and scamper, the Jugglers of Doom deftly juggle a multitude of colorful objects, and Jibbly the jester pretends to throw a pie at the Ringmaster but trips and splatters himself.

The villagers appear entranced by the spectacle. Eventually the Ringmaster moves so he is standing directly in front of the PCs. "And now for the grand finale!" he says. The Ring-

master then rips open his shirt, revealing the oscillating *chaos crystal*. He uses the *confusion* power of the artifact against the adventurers.

Any PCs who succeed at a saving throw vs spell with a -2 penalty may fight back. However, the entertainers also join in the fray, protecting the Ringmaster, who continues to use the *confusion* or *charm person* powers of the crystal on resisting PCs. The Ringmaster might also use the *alter others* power on helpless PCs during the battle. He uses the *finger of death* only as a last resort.

If the PCs manage to defeat the Ringmaster and his entertainers, skip Episode Three and continue with Episode Four.

If all of the PCs are *confused* or *charmed*, the Ringmaster then uses the *alter others* power on all of them. Describe to the players how their characters are befuddled by the swirling colors, and how they begin to feel their bodies changing horribly. The PCs then fall unconscious. (The *chaos crystal* is an artifact; saving throws against its *alter others* power fail automatically). Continue with Episode Three.

Episode Three: The PCs awaken the next night to find themselves *altered*. The PCs are caged in wagons and are the latest attractions at the Carnival of the Bizarre! Villagers pass through the PCs' wagon to stare at them in shock. The adventurers are a popular exhibit!

Be imaginative when inventing new forms for the PCs. For example, a character might have the lower body of a giant snake, the torso of a lizard man, and the head of a minotaur. Other PCs might have less severe alterations, such as being covered with multi-colored feathers.

The PCs' clothing and equipment does not transform with them. These are taken and locked in the Ringmaster's private wagon.

Eventually, assuming the PCs have not escaped on their own, Jibbly the jester enters the wagon. He lies to them, saying that only the powers of the crystal can return them to their true forms. (In truth, only the destruc-

tion of the artifact will help the adventurers.) The jester makes them an offer: He will free them and use the crystal to restore them, if they will help him defeat the Ringmaster. Jibbly also demands the *chaos crystal* as his reward.

Episode Four: The PCs confront the Ringmaster and recover the *chaos crystal*.

By the time Jibbly frees the PCs (or they free themselves), it is midnight of the next day, and another performance is in progress within the big top. The adventurers can find the Ringmaster there. (PCs may recover their weapons and equipment from the Ringmaster's wagon first; this is OK.)

Jibbly has previously persuaded the Gnomes of the Moon to aid him in his bid to overthrow the Ringmaster. The diminutive thieves lurk in the shadows around the big top. When the battle begins, they *blink* into the fray, helping the adventurers.

When the final blow is struck against the Ringmaster, the *chaos crystal* withdraws its tendrils and emerges from the elf's flesh to hang around his neck by its obsidian chain. In the last few moments of his life, Laxantri's true personality emerges. "Destroy the crystal!" he says. "Bathe it in the tears of a pious woman. This is the only way . . . (gasp)." The PCs cannot heal Laxantri—the crystal greedily absorbs his life force.

The *chaos crystal* can now be taken from the dead elf. Those villagers and entertainers (and PCs) who were *charmed* by the Ringmaster are no longer affected. However, *altered* characters remain so until the artifact is destroyed.

Remember that Jibbly wants the crystal. If possible, the jester and the gnomes turn against the PCs to get the artifact.

Episode Five: The PCs must enter the city to find the pious woman—Arinna the pilgrim. Because the PCs now appear to be monsters, entering the metropolis is not easy.

The players must be creative to get inside

the city. Posing as carnival performers is one obvious scheme, but many others are possible. If their plan is unimaginative or poorly thought out, make things difficult.

Climax

From speaking with Arinna at the start of the adventure, the PCs should know that she is headed for a park at the center of the city.

The PCs eventually find Arinna in the park. She crouches on the ground with her head in her hands weeping quietly—the broken pieces of the statuette litter the ground. Vandals have taken their toll.

At first, Arinna is horrified at the sight of the adventurers. However, she vaguely recognizes them and offers to help.

The PC holding the *chaos crystal* notices it getting warm, growing, and flashing colorful lights like crazy. Something is up!

The artifact has a sense of self-preservation. Realizing the danger of Arinna's tears, it summons help. (Because of the woman's piety, she is immune to the artifact's magical powers, such as *finger of death*.) A thunderclap roars overhead, and a magical *gate* appears in the sky 50 feet above the party. A greater guardian daemon swoops through the *gate* to attack the adventurers.

If the PCs wash the *chaos crystal* with Arinna's tears, it dissolves into a shimmering gas. Hundreds of life forces are released to scream and howl as they vanish to the Ethereal plane. If the bodies of any PCs killed by the artifact are present, their life forces return—the characters live again! Also, any characters who were *altered* return to normal.

Even if the artifact is destroyed, the PCs must still deal with the daemon. If the adventurers are having an easy time of it, the DM might bring another daemon (or similar creature) through the *gate* before the magical portal vanishes.

Denouement

If everything has gone well, the adventurers have destroyed the *chaos crystal*, returning themselves to their true forms. *Altered* villagers and other NPCs are also restored.

But is the crystal really destroyed? After dissolving into a gas, it vanished to the Ethereal plane. After several years, it may once again reform. Perhaps later in their careers the adventurers will encounter its evil again.

Rewards

The only treasure to be had in this adventure is that of the Ringmaster and his minions, but perhaps the PCs find a chest hidden under the floorboards of the Ringmaster's wagon. Inside may be valuables worth several thousand gp and a magical item or two. However, the characters should be given a hefty XP bonus if they were resourceful and creative about resolving the situation. As a story reward, an experience point bonus of 15,000 per PC is suggested if they performed well and destroyed the artifact.

Grave Plots

This section contains more adventure ideas. These are not presented in outline form. It is up to the DM to use the Master Outline to flesh them out.

The Bounty Hunter

This concept is best as an ongoing subplot taking place over several unrelated adventures. The basic idea is that an NPC villain encountered by PCs during a previous adventure has hired a bounty hunter to track them down.

A creative DM can invent an intriguing NPC bounty hunter—perhaps a ranger or thief with some useful magical items, such as

a *ring of invisibility* and a *ring of human influence*. The bounty hunter might not even be human, but a monster with the ability to pass through society unnoticed—a doppelganger, perhaps. Maybe more than one exists—a secret society of bounty hunters?

The DM must tailor the bounty hunter's objectives to the campaign. Has he been hired to capture or kill the PCs? Maybe the bounty hunter is after a magical item owned by a player character. Maybe the PC is not even aware the item is magical!

In any case, encounters with the mysterious bounty hunter and his network of spies will add drama and intrigue to the adventures. This should start with the PCs feeling they are being watched in cities and towns. Build paranoia among the players: Is the man standing in the shadowy doorway just scratching his nose, or is it a secret signal?

Eventually, the situation escalates until traps and ambushes are set in the party's path. However, the bounty hunter always escapes, only to appear during later adventures at the most inopportune time for the PCs.

Finally, the adventurers confront the bounty hunter in a climactic battle and learn who has hired him and for what reasons. Will the PCs track down the villain who hired the bounty hunter to settle the score? Was it all a mistake to begin with? If not, and the PCs do nothing, will other, more deadly, opponents be sent after them?

The Competition

This is a simple concept, but when played properly, can add considerable depth to any adventure. The idea is to realize that the PCs are not the only adventurers in the game world—they have competitors.

Design some intriguing NPC adventuring groups for the PCs to encounter from time to time. What if one of these groups has the

same objective as the PCs? Will the two parties combine forces, or become mortal enemies?

Suppose one of these adventuring bands follows the PCs around, hoping to steal objects or clues from the PCs. How long will the PCs put up with this band finding the treasure hoard, solving the mystery, or rescuing the king's daughter ahead of them?

The False Invasion

Rumors are spreading like wild fire—an army of horrid monsters is gathering on the nation's borders. The PCs witness the rising tide of panic as people from border regions migrate to the cities and fortresses, where everyone prepares for the coming siege. Soon, however, it is discovered that the invasion was a hoax. There is no evil army.

During the course of the adventure, the PCs learn that the hoax was masterminded by an even more horrible evil to conceal the real threat, which has been unfolding behind the scenes the entire time. However, no one will heed the PCs' warning because of the massive hoax which just came to light.

This type of adventure involves a secret power struggle at the heart of the nation. Diplomacy and subterfuge are the order of the day. As allegiances change, the PCs may never be certain exactly who is a friend and who is an enemy.

Can the PCs convince the forces of good of the internal threat? Or will they be forced to take matters into their own hands?

Guinea Pigs

The PCs are persuaded (bribed, coerced, etc.) to test some new magical items for a powerful wizard NPC. The wizard might be the mentor of a PC spellcaster, who feels obliged to undertake the task and convinces the other party members to do likewise.

These strange magical items get the PCs into all kinds of trouble. This is the perfect opportunity to introduce new and powerful items, knowing that the PCs must give them back at the adventure's conclusion.

Suppose a rival wizard wants the objects. Her minions continually harass the PCs. The wizard might even steal one or two of the items, forcing the adventurers to get them back.

The magical objects themselves might be dangerous. What if they are enchanted with wild magic? The PCs may have to deal with wild surges. (See the *Tome of Magic*.) The items' intended effects might be faulty, too strong, or too weak. Let your imagination roam.

One of the objects might even displace time, sending the PCs into the near future for a brief period. Suppose they meet themselves. This gives the ideal chance to foreshadow major upcoming events of the campaign. Present the players with vague clues revealed by the future characters to their past selves. For example, a PC in the future might have horrible burn scars that the present character does not. "Beware the yellow-haired sorceress!" says the future character. The players will certainly be on their toes the next time they encounter a blond wizard!

Looming Tall

The PCs suddenly begin to grow at an increasing rate (suggested: a rate of 1 foot per turn, increasing to 1 foot per round). The PCs' clothing and belongings do not grow with them!

This situation is best if played in an underground setting. After exploring the dungeon or caverns and locating the main villain's treasure, the PCs are *curled* to grow uncontrollably. At first, their increased strength and damage potential may seem like a boon. However, when the characters' clothing

begins to tear and they have trouble fitting through doors and passages, the players will realize the danger—they must quickly escape the dungeon or become hopelessly trapped!

The duration of the growth is the DM's decision. Perhaps it persists until the characters reach a specified height, at which point they begin shrinking, and end up at their normal height. In a wilderness setting, the PCs might grow immensely huge—say 100 feet tall!

Be warned, however—the players may decide to undertake some titanic task, such as demolishing Lord Evil's castle. Even so, a couple of options are possible: cause the PCs to shrink to normal size, or allow them to make the attempt. Remember that even though they may be incredibly strong, the PCs retain their normal number of hit points. The catapults, ballistae, and archers of Lord Evil are still effective, especially when shooting at such huge targets.

How will gigantic PCs find enough food to sustain them? How will they clothe themselves? What will they use for weapons? How will the local authorities react to these thundering giants? The possibilities for fun role-playing are endless.

Mirror, Mirror

Encountering a *mirror of opposition* can lead to a very interesting adventure. Suppose that rather than attacking immediately, the duplicates flee from the PCs. The evil duplicates then attempt to take over the adventurers' lives.

The PCs need not necessarily know the duplicates have been created. Perhaps the characters walked past the mirror, and their evil twins did not appear for minutes, hours, or even days later.

Imagine the players' surprise when their characters return from an adventure to find that duplicates of them have been up to mis-

chief. Once friendly NPCs may now think of the adventurers as enemies. Alternatively, the NPCs might believe the real PCs to be the duplicates, and the duplicates to be the real adventurers. Perhaps the hapless heroes are even wanted for crimes committed by the duplicates.

Missing: One Spell Book

Want an adventure to get PC wizards excited? Try one in which their spell books are stolen!

The adventure might involve a series of encounters to track down the master thief who made off with the books—only to find that the books have already been sold to an evil wizards' guild. Locating and infiltrating the guild will certainly make for an exciting evening of role-playing.

This type of adventure can be a good learning experience for the players. The importance of the wizard and her spells quickly becomes obvious to the players of warriors, rogues, and priests. In turn, the wizard player is reminded just how vulnerable she is without spell books, and how important the other party members are to her survival.

Nature Gone Wild!

Like our own world, most game worlds are turbulent places held firmly in the grasp of the forces of nature. By challenging their characters with a natural disaster, the players can be reminded of this fact.

Tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, hail storms, thunderstorms, flash floods, mud slides, avalanches, and so forth make traveling from point A to point B exciting and potentially deadly. An entire adventure might even be based on solving the mystery of why the forces of nature have suddenly gone wild.

Imagine a chaotic region several miles in diameter perpetually filled with storms and

other displays of nature's forces. At the center of this region is a mysterious castle, ancient ruin, or wizard's tower. What makes this situation dangerous is the fact that this region is expanding, and will soon engulf a nearby town or city, or possibly even the manor lands and castle of a high-level player character. The adventurers must enter the turbulent region, explore the building(s) at its center, and put a stop to the growing mayhem.

What is the cause of the chaos? Perhaps it is the result of a wizard's experiment gone haywire. The PCs must overcome the demented wizard and his guardians, and figure out how to "shut off" the experiment.

Suppose the turbulence is "Mother Nature's" way of destroying a threat lurking at the core of the affected region. This threat could be an evil creature or artifact that is draining the very life force of the planet. It could also be something less powerful, such as a goblin mining operation that is polluting and destroying the surrounding countryside. The PCs must remove the threat in order to appease "Mother Nature," who might actually be a nature-oriented deity.

Polsoned

Believe it or not, poisoning the PCs can lead to an exciting adventure! This requires a unique poison—one that doesn't immediately kill the adventurers, but slowly takes its toll. The PCs must have time to find the antidote.

Physical exertion spreads the toxin. For each round performing a strenuous activity (fighting, running, swimming, carrying a heavy load, etc.), afflicted characters lose 1d4 hit points. While poisoned, PCs cannot regain lost hit points through magic or rest. *Slow poison*, *neutralize poison*, and similar spells and spell-like effects are useless for thwarting the poison. Players who jump at the first chance of combat may now find themselves trying to keep their characters out of battle!

The poison may also have one or more side effects (DM's choice), which persist until afflicted characters are cured:

- -1 to -3 on Strength score due to weakness.
- -1 to -3 on Dexterity score due to loss of balance.
- -3 to -5 on Charisma score due to festering, foul-smelling boils covering the character's body.
- -1 to -3 on attack rolls due to poor depth perception and body aches
- Character suffers from horrifying hallucinations.
- Character's skin is so sore and irritated that only loose-fitting clothing of soft, supple material can be worn—otherwise, character can wear or carry nothing! Weapons may be wielded, but this is so painful and damaging to the PC's hands as to cause the loss of 1 hit point per round.

Determine the cure for the poison. The first question to ask is *Who created the poison?* This NPC creator knows of the antidote. Clues during the adventure should lead the PCs to this character, who either has the cure on hand, or requires the adventurers to find one or more rare components so the antidote can be prepared.

Next, ask *How and why were the PCs poisoned?* Here are some possibilities.

Perhaps an NPC gave them poisoned food or drink. Was it an accident, or an attempt at assassination? Maybe the NPC blackmails the adventurers into performing a service in exchange for the name of the herbalist who knows of the antidote. Performing the task (or devising a creative way to avoid performing it), locating the mysterious herbalist, finding the rare ingredients of the antidote, and administering the cure before the poisoning becomes fatal forms the crux of the adventure.

Maybe the poison is a new type of blade venom

created by the shaman of a tribe of evil humanoids (goblins, orcs, kobolds, ogres, etc.), and used against the PCs during an encounter. How can the PCs convince the shaman to give them the cure? Perhaps he has a rival he wishes the PCs to eliminate. Does he really have the antidote, or does he need some rare ingredients the adventurers must locate?

The poison might have been part of a gas trap guarding the treasure at the climax of the previous adventure. In this case, helping the PCs discover who created the poison can be a bit more tricky. The NPC who owned the treasure the PCs are stealing likely knows, but is that NPC still among the living? Perhaps the trapmaker was so bold as to leave a calling card—an engraved plate stating, "In need of a good trap? Visit the shop of Arsenico." What city does Arsenico reside in? Is he still alive? Is the trapmaker missing? And so, the adventure begins.

The poison might actually be a disease afflicting a community the PCs visited—thus, not only the adventurers' lives are at stake, but also those of many others. What caused the plague? Can the PCs locate the cure? How will neighboring communities react to afflicted characters?

Be careful when running this adventure. Some players may resent having their characters poisoned, and may refuse to role-play the situation properly. If the players are not having fun, end the adventure quickly. Perhaps the PCs bump into an NPC healer who happens to have an antidote or the rare ingredients the adventurers are searching for.

Questing for Spell Components

Flipping through the *Player's Handbook* or *Tome of Magic*, it is apparent that many of the spells described there require scarce or valuable material spell components. Finding a rare component can be the "hook" that leads

PCs into an intriguing adventure.

Remember that material spell components can be found among the trappings of NPC spellcasters. Such items could be valuable treasure. For example, an NPC wizard who knows the *false vision* spell most likely has a small pouch filled with the 500 gp worth of emerald dust required to cast the spell.

Some material components might even be mistaken for magical items by the players. One of the components for the *Melf's minute meteors* spell, for instance, is a small hollow tube made of gold with magical engravings. When fiery meteors begin flying, the players might think the NPC wizard's golden tube is some type of magical wand. Even though it is not, it is a valuable bit of treasure, and adds depth to the encounter.

The Reluctant Vampire

This adventure is an offshoot of "Vampire Love," and the two could even be combined. A large city suffers a series of vampiric murders. The PCs become involved and hunt the vampire(s).

These murders are strange in that the victims' families have received apologetic letters and pouches of gems and coins—the vampire is remorseful! Of course, the families (and local authorities) still want justice to be done, and may offer the PCs a portion of these valuables as a reward.

Eventually, after several developmental encounters, the PCs confront the vampire in its lair. Rather than attacking the adventurers, however, the vampire begs for help. The creature loathes its condition, and wants to be mortal once again. Earlier in the adventure, the party heard rumors of a magical object said to have the power to cure vampirism. Will the PCs help?

As a subplot, assume the reluctant vampire was transformed into its undead form by an evil vampire, who is also responsible for

some of the murders. This evil NPC does not want the reluctant vampire to revert to humanity, and wants the magical item destroyed. Perhaps this evil vampire is part of a "coven" of undead who conflict with the PCs during the course of the adventure. Maybe the evil vampire is a recurring villain the PCs have encountered before as a mortal, and is now even more powerful after becoming undead.

A Romantic Interlude

Love is a powerful emotion. Adding romance to stories is certain to make them more believable and intriguing. This type of tale often involves a pair of lovers who are separated due to some unfortunate circumstance—the princess has been kidnapped by the villain, family members will not allow the

lovers to be together, etc. The adventure involves overcoming the obstacles to reach a happy conclusion. "Strange Renaissance," a story outlined in this chapter, is an example of an adventure with romantic elements.

Generally, romances concern NPCs, leaving the adventurers on the sidelines. It is much better to get the PCs directly involved. Delve into the backgrounds of the adventurers. The players will be much more motivated if the kidnapped princess is the lost love of a party member, for example.

Also, remember that romance does not necessarily mean someone is in love. The idealized qualities of chivalry and heroism are quite romantic. The solitary knight riding off to slay the dragon is certainly a poetic figure. Adding similar emotions to stories makes them more whimsical and passionate.



Standing Small

Traps, spells, and magical items that shrink the PCs are not new, but when used effectively, they can result in unique adventures. Typically, these situations arise in a dungeon setting. Simply changing the venue makes for a different adventure.

Imagine the PCs suddenly shrinking to a height of one inch amid the hustle and bustle of a crowded tavern. The dangers are numerous: stomping feet, sliding chairs, and spilled mugs of ale or wine. Normal insects such as spiders, ants, flies, and roaches are now giant monsters. Mice are as big as horses, and the tavern's cat is fierce indeed!

Because of the noise in the tavern, the PCs find it very difficult to attract the attention of the "giants" around them. To make things more interesting, suppose a fight breaks out shortly after the PCs shrink. Simply crossing the tavern floor and escaping alive is an adventure in itself.

However, there are still questions to be answered. Why and how have the PCs been shrunk? Was their wine poisoned? Is it the result of some strange curse, spell, or wild magic?

Maybe the PCs are not alone. They might meet others who have been shrunk. From these NPCs, the adventurers learn what is going on, and how to resolve the situation.

As a twist, suppose the PCs exit the tavern to find that they didn't really shrink—the tavern and all of its furnishings and occupants grew! What has caused this strangeness? Ah, another mystery . . .

Thief of Shadows

This adventure involves a quest to find something the PCs probably thought they would never lose—their shadows!

A deranged wizard has created a new type of magical item called the *orb of shadows*. It has

the power to steal the shadows of nearby creatures

Once a shadow is stolen, the wizard can manipulate the shadow like the strings of a puppet, forcing the creature that cast the shadow to do his bidding. The range of this effect might be limited to 1-10 miles or so. The wizard can steal many different shadows, but can control only 1-8 at a time

For example, if the wizard steals the shadow of a PC, the adventurer's body can be controlled from a distance. The PC knows he/she is being manipulated, and performs commanded actions in a jerky, robotic manner. A saving throw might be granted to resist harmful or uncharacteristic actions, such as harming one's self or attacking friends.

The adventure begins with the PCs losing their shadows to the wizard. This makes for an exciting exposition, getting the adventure off to a good start. Obviously, the PCs will want to get their shadows back. No one wants to be controlled like a puppet.

The PCs must defeat the wizard and his puppet-minions, and figure out how to use the orb to get their shadows back. All the while, however, they must struggle against the powers of the orb, which is forcing them to fulfill some devious scheme.

Vampire Love

A vampire has fallen in love with one of the PCs! The adventurer looks exactly like someone the vampire loved a hundred years ago. Now, the undead blood-drinker is determined to wed the PC, but first, the PC must join the vampire—by becoming a vampire too!

How might the vampire NPC go about "courting" the player character? Imagine giving players a bizarre handout—a love letter written from a vampire's point of view!

Rejecting the vampire's favors results in a violent reaction; the undead NPC uses min-

ions to abduct the PC. The climax occurs as the party arrives at the vampire's lair just in time to stop a very strange wedding—complete with undead groomsmen and bridesmaids!

What if the PC becomes a vampire? It is best to assume the PC is not fully a vampire . . . yet. Perhaps a cure exists. Maybe the cure is a magical item or forgotten spell. The party must find it before the next full moon, which is the basis for an entire adventure itself.

As a subplot, assume the long-dead person the vampire originally loved is an ancestor of the PC. The adventurer is looking for information about this ancestor because he or she disappeared long ago with the family fortune. The vampire knows the answers. But will he or she tell?

Random Encounter Generator

Interesting nonplayer characters and the strange situations they get themselves and the PCs into are what make encounters memorable for the players and DM. Sometimes it can be difficult to “wing” such unusual encounters. The following system of tables can allow the DM to randomly generate the peculiarities of the NPC: who the NPC is, what he or she wants, and how he or she acts. Armed with this information, any DM can create an interesting (and often bizarre) encounter between the NPC and the adventurers.

Because the system is random, seemingly incompatible or illogical results may arise. *This is good.* It is this strangeness that makes the encounter memorable and intriguing. The DM's task is to think through the results, and use creativity to tie them together. Forget logic. Rely on imagination.

Using the Encounter Generator

The Random Encounter Generator is made up of a series of tables. These tables allow the

development of an NPC who is at the core of the encounter. From his or her peculiarities springs the adventure.

After checking a table, proceed to the next table indicated by the instructions. Always begin with Table 1, and finish the process rolling on Table 7. If a result is impossible according to the game rules (such as a dwarf paladin) just roll again.

Once you have rolled on the tables, combine and expand upon the results to create a unique encounter. Remember that what might seem illogical at first can be molded with a little creativity into something quite interesting.

Table 1: Race (1d10)

Go to Table 2 after rolling on this table.

1	Dwarf
2	Elf
3	Gnome
4	Half-Elf
5	Halfling
6-10	Human

Table 2: Occupation (1d100)

On a result of 23-29 (character class) go to Table 3. For all other results, skip to Table 4.

01	Acrobat
02	Actor
03	Animal Handler
04	Apothecary
05	Architect
06	Armorer
07	Artist
08	Astrologer
09	Baker
10	Barrister (lawyer)
11	Beggar
12	Blacksmith
13	Boatman
14	Bodyguard
15	Bookbinder
16	Bowyer/Fletcher

17	Brewer
18	Bricklayer
19	Butcher
20	Candlemaker
21	Carpenter
22	Cartwright
23-29	Character class
30	Clothing maker
31	Coachman
32	Cook
33	Diplomat
34	Dyer
35	Embroiderer
36	Engineer
37	Engraver
38	Farmer
39	Fisherman
40	Fishmonger
41	Food seller
42	Forester
43	Fortune-teller
44	Furrier
45	Gambler
46	Gardener
47	Glassblower
48	Government official
49	Grain merchant
50	Gravedigger
51	Grocer
52	Guard
53	Hatter
54	Herald
55	Herbalist
56	Hunter
57	Innkeeper
58	Interpreter
59	Jester
60	Jeweler
61	Juggler
62	Laborer
63	Leatherworker
64	Locksmith
65	Mason
66	Mercenary
67	Messenger

68	Miller
69	Miner
70	Minstrel
71	Moneylender
72	Musician
73	Navigator
74	Nobleman
75	Noblewoman
76	Painter
77	Peasant
78	Peddler
79	Physician
80	Pilgrim
81	Playwright
82	Politician
83	Potter
84	Rat catcher
85	Sage
86	Sailor
87	Scribe
88	Servant
89	Shepherd
90	Shipwright
91	Shoemaker
92	Soldier
93	Spy
94	Squire
95	Stonecarver
96	Storyteller
97	Trapper
98	Weapon maker
99	Weaver
00	Woodcarver

Table 3: Character Class (1d6)
To to Table 4 after rolling on this table.

1	Fighter
2	Paladin
3	Priest
4	Ranger
5	Thief
6	Wizard

Table 4: NPC Motivation (1d100)

After rolling on this table, go to Table 7 unless otherwise indicated.

01-02	Wants to buy something
03-04	Wants to sell something
05-06	Wants to steal something
07-08	Being pursued
09-10	Pursuing someone/thing
11-12	Needs information
13-14	Lost
15-16	Malign intentions
17-18	Asks for help
19-20	Wants to be hired
21-22	Wants to hire PCs
23-24	Involved in a fight
25-26	Idle conversation
27-28	Mistakes PC for someone else
29-30	Wants PCs' opinion on some issue
31-32	Opinionated comments
33-34	Rude comments
35-36	Curiosity
37-38	Unexplained interest
39-40	Eating
41-42	Drinking
43-44	Hates a character class (Table 5)
45-46	Hates a race (Table 6)
47-48	Practicing a skill
49-50	Accidentally bumps into PCs
51-52	Crowd forces NPC and PCs together
53-54	Asks for a favor
55-56	Drunk
57-58	Wants PCs to settle dispute
59-60	Loud argument
61-62	Being chased by dogs
63-64	Knocked over by someone else
65-66	Sleeping in inappropriate place
67-68	Being hassled by town guards
69-70	Looking for lost item
71-72	Looking for lost friend/relative
73-74	Looking for a fight
75-76	Doing job
77-78	Compliments PC for some reason
79-80	Having pocket picked
81-82	Attacks PC for no apparent reason

83-84	Looking for someone who reads
85-86	Begging for food
87-88	Begging for a drink
89-90	Transporting goods
91-92	Delivering a message
93-94	Chasing a spooked horse
95-96	Repairing broken cart wheel
97-98	Trying to calm jealous husband/wife
99-00	Being mugged

Table 5: Hated Class (1d12)

Go to Table 7 after checking this table.

1	Fighter
2	Paladin
3	Priest
4	Ranger
5-8	Thief
9-12	Wizard

Table 6: Hated Race (1d12)

Go to Table 7 after checking this table.

1-3	Dwarf (Table 2)
4-5	Elf (Table 2)
6-7	Gnome (Table 2)
8-9	Half-Elf (Table 2)
10-11	Halfling (Table 2)
12	Human (Table 2)

Table 7: NPC Quirks (1d100)

01	Angry
02	Sad
03	Overly friendly
04	Ugly
05	Handsome/Beautiful
06	Very old
07	Very young
08	Disreputable
09	Dirty
10	Sloppy
11	Neat
12	Fastidious
13	Speaks foreign language

14	Talks too much	59	Enormously fat
15	Taciturn	60	Incredibly thin
16	Ill	61	Alcoholic
17	Injured	62	Armed to the teeth
18	Seriously injured	63	Bigoted
19	Dying	64	Blind
20	Wise	65	Cautious
21	Foolish	66	Foolhardy
22	Dressed inappropriately	67	Forgetful
23	Very quiet	68	Incompetent
24	Witty	69	Clumsy
25	Cultured	70	Defensive
26	Rude	71	Disorganized
27	Stupid	72	Dressed outlandishly
28	Wise	73	Loud
29	Personable	74	Messy
30	Uncouth	75	Missing an arm
31	Deadbeat look	76	Missing a leg
32	Charismatic	77	Missing an eye
33	Tells bad jokes	78	Missing an ear
34	Stutters	79	Mute
35	Naive	80	Owens mean dog
36	Stranger to town	81	Plays musical instrument
37	Arrogant	82	Practical joker
38	Impatient	83	Sadistic
39	Trusting	84	Smells bad
40	Generous	85	Inferiority complex
41	Stingy	86	Insane
42	Poor	87	Irritating
43	Wealthy	88	Kleptomaniac
44	Religious fanatic	89	Knows everything
45	Non-religious fanaticism	90	Laughs too much
46	Brave	91	Compulsive liar
47	Cowardly	92	Will not lie
48	Reckless	93	Limps
49	Passive	94	Speaks many languages
50	Full of energy	95	Tells tall tales
51	Paranoid	96	Uncooperative
52	Manic	97	Very bright
53	Depressed	98	Well traveled
54	Boring	99	Whistles when nervous
55	Half-asleep	00	Roll twice on this table
56	Nondescript		
57	Notable possession		
58	Aggressive		



A character's ability scores are the first thing a player determines when creating a character, and one could argue that they represent the most basic and important traits that a person has. Nevertheless, players often forget about these ability scores, at least those that do not have a direct effect on the character's class and fighting ability. By looking at ability scores a new way, you can encourage more creativity and characterization among your players. And by devising contests that test the PC's abilities directly, you can make them more important to your campaign.

Rolling Dice vs. Abilities

Imagine this situation: Two PCs have found a large, stone statue, and they believe that a trap door may be hidden under it.

Player One: "My character has a 17 Strength. She tries to topple the statue."

DM: "Make an ability check against Strength."

Player One: [rolling d20] "Rats, I missed. I got a 19."

Player Two: "My character will try. He's got a 7 Strength. [Rolls d20.] Made it!"

DM: "The statue topples, revealing a chute heading straight down."

The standard ability check is simple and versatile, but it can create some unusual situations, such as a weakling performing a feat of strength that a very powerful character fails to perform. (Admittedly, the chance of the above-detailed exchange taking place is only 5%, but that's not too unlikely, after all.) Now imagine that those two characters had found three statues that they wanted to topple, one large, one small, and one in between. How would the GM take into account the different weights of these statues when determining the chance for each character to topple one? The standard ability check doesn't take the difficulty of the task into account.

With a little familiarity with probability, you can fine-tune ability checks to make them represent different circumstances. Simply use dice other than the d20. For instance, consider the example of the statue that the two characters are trying to topple. The GM, ahead of time, could have determined that toppling it requires an ability check against strength using d4+12 instead of d20. This change makes a big difference.

First, it takes a much higher Strength to have a 50% chance to succeed (14 strength, instead of 10, for a standard ability check).

Second, there is a minimum Strength you must have to have any chance of success, in this case, the minimum is 13 strength. (A 13 Strength would give a PC a 25% chance to succeed; the player would need to roll a 1 on the d4.)

Third, there is a point at which toppling the statue doesn't even require a roll, specifically, Strength of 16 or better.

Overall, what this ability check means is that the task is beyond the ability of people who are weak, and relatively easy for those who are very strong. You still may get someone with a 13 strength succeed where someone with a 15 strength fails (this will happen about 6% of the time), but that's a lot more in keeping with common sense than someone with a 7 strength succeeding where someone with a 17 strength fails.

Determining the Ability Check

When determining how to set the ability check, two factors come into play: how predictable the task is, and how difficult it is. The more predictable it is, the smaller a die you use. The more difficult the task, the higher a bonus is added to the roll.

To calculate the average (mean) roll, add the minimum roll possible to the maximum, and divide by two. A standard ability check (d20) has an average roll of 10.5. Any ability

check that has a higher average is more difficult than normal, and any ability check that has a lower average is easier than normal. The d4+12 example, for instance, has an average of 14.5 (average roll of 2.5 for the d4, plus 12 for the bonus).

Sticking With the D20

One nice thing about the d20 check is that a roll of 20 always fails, and that everyone has at least some chance of success. This unpredictability is actually desirable when an ability check serves as a saving throw. After all, you don't want a situation in which some PCs are automatically killed by a falling weight, while other PCs are not at any risk because their dexterity is high enough. Players do not take well to having PCs killed without some chance to save them, and making a saving throw automatic removes the suspense that is such a fun part of the game.

If you want everyone to have at least a 5% chance to fail a given task, you may wish to use the d20 exclusively, and merely add or subtract a number based on the task's difficulty. Toppling the statue in the example might require a roll on d20+4 (average = 14.5). In this circumstance, the chance that the 7 Strength character would succeed while the 17 Strength character fails would still be about 5%, but the stronger character's chance to succeed would be over four times the chance of the weaker character, instead of being only two-and-a-half times as likely to succeed using the standard check.

If you are going to use the d20 check, you may want to have a roll of 1 always succeed, just as a roll of 20 always fails.

Strength: Strength is a relatively predictable ability. In other words, a stronger person is very likely to succeed at any task that a weaker person succeeds at. Use a small die, such as d4, when making ability checks. An average task (with the same average as a

d20 check) would be d4+8. If the task is difficult, increase the bonus; if it is easy, decrease it.

Dexterity: Dexterity checks usually result from a sudden danger (in which case Dexterity represents reflexes) or from tricky maneuvers (in which case it represents coordination). Chance plays a much bigger role in these tasks than in tests of strength, so use a d10 or d12 for Dexterity. An average task would be d10+5 or d12+4. Increase or decrease the bonuses as needed, to reflect the difficulty of the task.

Constitution: Like strength, constitution is relatively predictable. If several people run a long distance, for example, some are going to tire earlier than others, and if you've seen these people run before, you can probably predict who'll tire first with fair consistency. For Constitution checks representing endurance, use a d6. An average check would be d6+7. Constitution check that represent health, such as catching or not catching a disease, or succumbing to noxious fumes, may be less predictable. Use a d8 or d10. Average checks would be d8+6 or d10+5.

Intelligence: Intelligence is very unpredictable, whether used to determine reasoning power or accumulated knowledge. Even someone with a low intelligence may know some obscure facts that apply to the situation, and we've all seen very intelligent people make some very stupid mistakes. Use d10 or d12 for Intelligence checks. Average checks are d10+5 or d12+4.

Wisdom: Like Intelligence, wisdom is unpredictable, so use d10 or d12 for Wisdom checks. Average checks are d10+5 or d12+4.

Charisma: The least predictable ability there is. Someone who everyone likes can still rub a stranger the wrong way, and an virtual social outcast can have some special feature that allows him to make a good impression on someone. Use d12 for Charisma checks, with the average check being d12+4.

Multiple Dice

Using several dice instead of a single one allows you to manipulate the odds, but it does take a little more familiarity with probabilities. For example, let's consider a Constitution check of $d8+6$. Another way to make a similar roll would be $3d4+3$; the average roll is the same, but using multiple dice in this example achieves two effects:

First, the minimum and maximum rolls are extended, so now someone with a 6 Constitution has a chance at success (about 1.5% chance) instead of none, and someone with a 14 Constitution has a chance to fail (again, 1.5%) instead of enjoying automatic success.

Second, the roll is heavily weighted to the center, so that lower scores are penalized and higher scores are rewarded. For example, a character with a 13 Constitution has a 12.5% chance to fail at $d8+6$, but only a 6.25% chance to fail on $3d4+3$.

Using multiple dice, then, has the advantage of allowing you to expand the range of possible rolls (so that fewer characters automatically succeed or fail), but to weight the middle range, so that you are still very unlikely to have high stat PCs fail where low stat PCs succeed. The main disadvantage is that it is quite tricky to keep track of multiple dice. If you're familiar with probabilities, you'll be able to figure it out based on these suggestions. If you're not, it's too much trouble to figure it out, so stick with the single dice.

Ability vs. Ability

Sometimes two characters (both PCs or a PC and an NPC) get into a direct contest of abilities. For instance, arm-wrestling pits Strength against Strength, while two characters competing for the affection of a beautiful princess pit Charisma against Charisma. Strictly speaking, these contests come in two

types: direct competition, in which someone must win and the others lose, and indirect competition, in which both might win or both might lose, but one can still do better than the other.

Direct Competition

Arm-wrestling and racing are examples of direct competition. It doesn't much matter how well you do, as long as you do better than your competition. In this case, each contestant rolls a die or dice, as determined by the DM. To the roll, each adds the appropriate ability. The higher total wins.

For example, if two people are having a foot race, each can roll $d10$ and add his Dexterity score. (This applies only if the two of them have the same movement rate. If the movement rates are different, the one with the higher rate will almost certainly win.) The one who rolls highest wins. For arm-wrestling, you may wish to use $d4$, to limit the chance that a weakling defeats a much stronger character.

If there is a tie, the characters can "roll-off" on another ability. In the case of the foot race or arm-wrestling, Constitution would serve as a good tie-breaker, because if the characters are tied in terms of power or speed, then the first one to tire will lose.

If the tie-breaker is a tie, you can get carried away and roll against a third ability (such as Strength in the foot race, determining perhaps who could get the most power into an early lead, or Wisdom for the arm-wrestling, representing willpower), or you can pick a random winner, or you can declare a tie, draw, or what have you. Going to a third ability will create suspense. If the contest is meant to be suspenseful, use that method. If not, use an easier one.

Just as with normal ability checks, the more predictable to contest, the smaller a die you should use.

Indirect Competition

When two courtiers vie for the affection of the princess, their competition is not as simple as a race. For these and similar circumstances, have each player make an standard ability check (d20), and determine the results by the following guidelines.

One succeeds, the other fails: Naturally, the character who succeeds has won the contest. In this example, the princess has fallen for him.

Both succeed: Both characters have done well, but the one who rolled higher has done better. In this example, the princess is impressed with both suitors, but if she had to pick, she would choose the character with the higher roll. Of course, the princess might not forget about the charming fellow who almost won her heart, so if your group likes soap operas, here's a great set-up for one.

Both fail: Neither character does well, but if a winner must be chosen, the one who rolled lower wins. For instance, the princess may be thrilled with neither suitor, but if she must chose one as her husband, she chooses whoever rolled lower. (Here's another soap opera starter, if that's your style.)

New Ways to Use Proficiencies

Just as was spelled out for ability checks above, you can alter the dice on which proficiency checks are made to represent easy, difficult, predictable, and unpredictable tasks. Some examples are given below.

Blacksmithing: Roll d10 for simple things, like making horseshoes. Most blacksmiths will be able to succeed automatically.

Status and Profession

PCs, especially at lower levels, may not be full-time adventurers. Even if they are, they may not be very far from their pre-adventur-

ing days. Proficiencies are a strong indication of the PCs' professions, either before they started adventuring or before adventuring becomes a full-time career.

A PC's career need not be a trivial detail. Imagine that the PCs find out that the leadership of the city has been corrupted by evil forces. Who can the PCs trust? Who can give them information that might help them free the city of evil influence? Who is willing to trust them? Naturally, the people they know best are the ones to whom they can turn. In addition to family, there are the co-workers and superiors that the PCs have or had at their various professions.

Connection with a certain profession can also help PCs when they travel. For example, suppose that the lawyers of the land have formed a guild, and that one of the PCs was a member before becoming an adventurer. Perhaps he can appeal at the lawyers' guild in a strange town for aid, advice, or shelter.

Players tend to think of their PCs in terms of class and race, but profession was a very important element of status in the Middle Ages. In your campaign, emphasizing the importance of professions can give the PCs a definite connection to the setting and keep nonadventuring NPCs from becoming a huge mass of undifferentiated "0-Levels."

Crucial Proficiencies

Proficiencies are usually less important to PCs than swords, spells, and hit points because proficiencies are less likely to make the difference between life and death. To keep your PCs on their toes, however, you can make specific proficiencies vital to specific incidents. Sometimes these crucial incidents are life-threatening, but they can also make the difference in less dangerous situations. Some proficiencies, such as blind fighting or running, lend themselves to dangerous situations, but even the tamer proficiencies

can be very important from time to time. For example.

Ancient History: A door in some ruins is plainly marked as deadly, but the mark was placed there 600 years ago. Now only someone familiar with ancient history can recognize the mark and realize that opening the door would be a BAD idea.

Animal Handling: Ever tried to get a mule that is loaded down with treasure across a narrow bridge that spans a deep chasm? (See the adventure idea on p. xx for the context in which this would make a lot of sense.)

Blacksmithing: The PCs are fleeing from overwhelming pursuers on "borrowed" horses that don't have shoes. A blacksmith to shoe the horses properly could make the difference between capture and escape.

Etiquette: The PCs have been framed and are on the run from the law. Acting inappropriately in the baron's keep draws some very unwanted attention.

Local History: No one pays attention to the old woman who has come to the city, except for the PC who makes a successful check on Local History and recognizes her as an evil sorceress believed slain 250 years ago.

Putting opportunities for PCs to be slaughtered or be saved all based on the roll of a single proficiency check is a matter of taste. It is certainly unfair to force the PCs into a situation in which the only escape is to make a proficiency check against a proficiency that none of the PCs have. The best use for crucial proficiencies is as an opportunity for the PCs to gain something special or avoid something bad, but not to determine the fate of the whole group. For example, the PCs may be able to take on the thing lurking behind the door that says "Danger" on it, but by knowing ancient history, a PC can save the PCs from having to fight it off, so they can save their magic and force on more profitable battles.

Noticeable Traits

Just as abilities can be associated with specific, noticeable traits (as outlined in the preceding chapter), so can proficiencies. The following examples show how this can be done.

Animal Handling: carries a slight but unmistakable odor

Brewing: talks disdainfully of others' brewing habits

Cobbling: wears very old and comfortable boots (since the character can keep them in repair instead of letting them wear out)

Reading/Writing: pale skin, from studying indoors so often

While it could be easy to go overboard with noticeable traits assigned to every ability and proficiency, players can always emphasize only those abilities and proficiencies that they feel are the most important; and you can do the same for your NPCs.

Proficiency-Oriented Adventures

Sometimes you may wish to devise an entire adventure that emphasizes the importance of proficiencies over spells and swords. Below are a few examples.

Shipwreck: The characters are shipwrecked or otherwise stranded, possibly without their equipment. The natives of this area have a lower technological level than the culture from which the characters come. Useful proficiencies may help the PCs make themselves valuable to the natives, who might otherwise turn them into supper. The natives then tell the PCs that they are expecting an invasion from a more powerful tribe or a large band of monsters. The only way to give the natives (and the PCs) a chance against the impending threat is to use certain proficiencies:

Armorer: making armor for the PCs and natives

Blacksmithing: making nails, tools, and pos-

sibly small metal weapons

Carpentry: making wooden fortifications, look-out posts, etc.

Engineering: building fortifications, bridges, traps, and so on

Leatherworking: making leather armor

Mining: obtaining iron ore for weapons and tools

Set Snares: thieves can set mantraps to slow or damage the invaders

Stonemasonry: constructing stone walls and forts

Weaponsmithing: arming the PCs and natives

A scenario such as this one proves that the PCs can succeed because of what they know, not just what they can buy or how well they can fight.

The King's Family: The PCs need to impress the king and his family in an attempt to gain a land grant (or other boon) from him. NPCs are competing for the same honor. Many options are open as the PCs attempt to make a good impression on the king's family, and it will be proficiencies, not swords and spells, that make the difference. For example:

Ancient History: impress the scholar of the family

Animal Training: present the princess with a well-trained bird or lapdog

Appraising: compliment the queen's jewels knowingly

Artistic Ability: present the king with a sculpture made in his honor, perhaps representing a military conquest for which he is famous

Dancing: impress the princess with the latest dance steps, the PC may have to use the "indirect competition" rules, if the rivals have a good dancer who is also trying to impress the princess

Etiquette: behave yourself at the dinner table, or get in trouble

Gaming: play cards with the prince, should the PC try to let the prince win? Can the PC

let the prince win without the his catching on? A rival may join the game. Resolve it using the "direct competition" rules as explained for ability checks.

Juggling: join the jesters and show off

Languages: recite a poem in whichever language is considered the most romantic and sophisticated

Local History: prove to the king that you know what's going on in his kingdom, what troubles he's having, and what policies of his have been very successful

Musical Instrument: show off; serenade the princess, if you think you can get away with it

Reading Lips: find out what your rivals are plotting across the room

Singing: lead the room in a stirring rendition of an ancient ballad; get the princess to join in, if you can

Weaving: present the royal family with an elegant tapestry

He's No Super Hero: Ancient ruins have repeatedly repelled attempts by adventurers to loot it; mere force has proven insufficient to penetrate the ruins' mysteries and dangers. Luckily for the PCs, an expert in "ancient Maltasian culture" is willing to accompany them into the ruins. With his knowledge of the ruins' signs, symbols, and inhabitants, he promises to give them the opportunity to loot the place. Without the expert's help to decipher writing, interpret friezes, predict the location of treasure chambers, talk to Maltasian ghosts, etc, the PCs would have a very hard time of it. Unfortunately, this expert is physically a weakling, and the PCs must be very careful to protect him from the various hazards to be found in the ruins. If protecting a weakling is not tough enough, perhaps the expert gets captured by denizens of the ruins and must be freed. For a really nasty twist, the expert secretly desires to gain control over a very powerful and evil magical item hidden in the ruins. Little do the PCs know that, while he is helping them defeat monsters and

gather riches, they are unwittingly helping him let loose a terrible evil on the land. Can the PCs figure out the expert's true motives in time to stop him?

New Ways to Use Old Monsters

Teaming Up

Player-character groups generally comprise adventurers with very different skills and abilities, such as wizards and warriors, elves and dwarves, thieves, and clerics, and so on. This diversity serves to make the group much stronger, as each character type can cover each others' weaknesses. What if monsters did the same? Below are some possible combinations to make the players sweat.

Troglodytes with guardian rust monsters. Alone, rust monsters are a nuisance, but they can't kill anyone. With the troglodytes in the battle with them, losing one's armor takes on a new level of danger. And the trogs, who favor stone weapons and such, do not have to worry about the rust monsters getting hungry and eating their equipment.

A mantichore ridden by a wizard. After the wizard cast protection from normal missiles on the mantichore, it can fly over a party raining down missiles with relative impunity. Add a few attack spells by the wizard, and the PCs could face quite a problem. After the mantichore's bolts are used up, the wizard and mantichore can decide whether the PCs are weak enough to attack on the ground, or whether they should exercise the better part of valor. (The two of them may wish to swoop down to collect any fallen PCs, for looting and eating, if they think they can get away with it.)

A vampire with a band of lesser minions. The minions can guard the vampire while it sleeps, break mirrors, destroy garlic, and otherwise protect their master from his weaknesses.

Counter-Alignment

Players soon catch on to which monsters to attack in which circumstances: which are good, which are evil, which neutral, and so on. Messing with these learned patterns can lead to a lot of fun. All you need to do is come up with a few reasons for monsters to act counter to their normal alignment and watch the fun.

Evil Monsters You Can't Kill

The baron of the land through which the PC's are traveling has hired a band of bugbears (or other creatures that the PCs can easily handle) to guard his mines. The unknowing PCs get too close to the baron's mines and are accosted by threatening bugbears. How would your players react? Once the PCs have dispatched the bugbears, they find an unknown emblem on their armor. The emblem doesn't mean anything until they arrive at the baron's castle and see the emblem prominently displayed over the castle entrance. Once inside, they hear stories of evil bandits who attacked the baron's new guards. A set-up like this could turn the PCs into outlaws; they might even be hunted down by lawful good bounty-hunters. If the PCs try to make amends for their actions, making it up to the baron might be easier than making it up to the bugbears. What if the bugbears' system of justice demands the death penalty for the PCs?

Evil Monsters You Must Befriend

The PCs are searching out an evil wizard's tower to put an end to him. En route, they encounter a band of hobgoblins (or goblins or ogre magi, whatever is appropriate for the power level of the PCs). Unknown to the PCs, these monsters are also out to get the wizard. Sure, he's evil, but if he's a rival of theirs, or if

he's been trying to take their community over, they have cause to oppose him. If the PCs slaughter the monsters, they have just lost some very valuable allies. Even if the monsters cannot provide a lot of muscle, they may have secret knowledge that will make penetrating the wizard's tower much easier. This option works especially well if the monsters are much weaker than the PCs, so the PCs have to protect creatures they would normally kill on sight. For instance, the monsters may be goblins who are off to kill the wizard because he has enslaved a large part of their tribe. The goblins guarding the tower would certainly set off the alarm and fight in self-defense if the PCs present themselves, but their new-found goblin allies can sneak up to their fellows, explain the situation, and get the PCs into the tower without the wizard and his other guards being alerted.

In this scenario, even if the PCs realize that the monsters are also after the wizard, they must be able to trust the monsters, and convince the monsters to trust them, before the two sides can work together. The journey to the wizard's tower may be quite interesting. Who leads (and thus turns their backs on the others)? Who takes watch? Do the two groups even try to get along, maybe share a meal or a few camp songs? Do harelings among the PCs take well to the new allies? Can the leader of the monsters keep his own warriors under control?

The end of the adventure also presents some questions. Once the wizard has been slain, what do the PCs do? Killing their erstwhile allies may get them some more experience points, and killing evil creatures is a good thing to do, but is it really honorable to turn against those who have helped one defeat a major menace? In lieu of trust, is there a way that the PCs and the monsters can split up so that neither can attack the other?

Good Monsters You Have to Fight

The PCs need to get through a mountain range ruled by dwarves. Unfortunately, the dwarves are not on good terms with the neighboring nations, and the secret dwarvish Festival of Earthroot is underway. The upshot of this is that no nondwarves are allowed through the mountains. The people of the neighboring nations know this, so the only people who do go into the mountains at this time are bandits (euphemistically known as "adventurers") after the secrets or treasures of the dwarves. The PCs can try to sneak through, but even having dwarves in the party will not keep them from being attacked. (Dwarves in the party will be seen as traitors to their race.) If the PCs surrender to show their goodwill, they are still captured and held until after the Festival, at which time they are questioned and probably released, but by then it is too late for the PCs to fulfill their mission.

To get through the mountains, the PCs have to avoid dwarvish patrols instead of just fighting them. This scenario allows magic-using characters to use unusual spells, rather than relying on fireballs and spiritual hammers, and gives warriors the opportunity to try out non-lethal attacks. For powerful characters who are used to slaughtering or routing all opponents, the experience of fleeing the attacking dwarves could be humbling and educational (and might give you some secret satisfaction).

A twist on the above example would be for an evil enemy to have good (or even just neutral) guards in his service. They might be people or beasts that have been charmed, or they may have been tricked into believing that the person they are guarding is good. For instance, the PCs may be the only ones who know that a certain public figure is evil, while he maintains the facade of being good. Lacking time or proof to turn public opinion

against their enemy, they have to fight their way through well-meaning guards to get to their target. This scenario is tougher than the one above because the PCs cannot simply flee; they have to overcome guards, hopefully without killing or maiming them.

The Moral Dilemma

The evil monsters that PCs usually encounter are killed without remorse. They are generally warriors on the rampage, and slaughtering them is clean and emotionless. But what about the females and the children whose fathers are killed by the PCs?

In one scenario, the PCs are launching an attack on the stronghold of bandits (or pirates, or whatever). Things are going well until the PCs find the wives and children of the bandits. The wives plead for the lives of their husbands; without their men, they will be at the mercy of the cruel world, and the fate of homeless women and children is often not pretty. Do the PCs spare the bandits for the sake of their families? Do they slaughter the men and then provide funds for the families to support themselves? (If so, do some of the older children come looking to avenge their dead fathers in a year or two?)

The emotions can get more intense if the PCs are clearing an expanse of land of monsters, such as an area they intend to control themselves. Killing the beasts and the orc warriors may be familiar activity, but what do the PCs do when they find the home of the orcs, where the females and children are? They can't leave the things there to breed a next generation of evil monsters; and they are inherently evil, so there is little hope of reforming them. Can the PCs stomach the thought of slaughtering helpless humanoids? Would their deities approve? Even forcing the orcs to move to another territory will mean hardship and death for the very young and the weak, and may lead to a problem with

orcs in another territory. A scenario like this shows that living by the sword is not always a glamorous profession.

Before you try such an emotionally-charged scenario, be sure you know your players. Many groups may not be ready to see this "dirty" side of the violent profession of adventuring.

New Ways to Use an Old Power

Bullywugs

Bullywugs are typically cannon fodder, but they do have the apparently innocuous ability to swim very well. You might not think of swimming as a combat skill, but it could certainly turn the tide in battle. Imagine that the PCs need to take boats through a swamp inhabited by bullywugs. First, the bullywugs may be hard to spot while they lurk like alligators in the water, their eyes peaking out, watching the conspicuous PCs in their boats. Then, the bullywugs attack, but instead of fighting fair, they swim under the boats and overturn them, or break holes in the bottom. Are the PCs wearing heavy armor? If so, they are going to have a hard time dealing with being dunked. If not, they are much more vulnerable than they would like to be against the bullywugs' attacks. Even those PCs who can swim are not as adept in the water as the bullywugs, making combat against these "wimps" a much greater challenge. And what of the PCs' supplies: looted treasures, rations, and other equipment in the overturned or sinking boats? While bullywugs might not be the brightest monsters, neither are they too stupid to fight dirty. They're not the toughest monsters, but in their home ground, they could give an experienced group quite a fight.

Yeti in the Blizzard

A blizzard blows in while the PCs are marching through high mountains. The blizzard itself is not a threat, but a gang of yetis is following it, hunting for easy prey. Immunity to cold and the ability to see through wind-driven snow are not offensive abilities in themselves, but when the PCs are blinded by the blizzard and freezing from the cold, a couple of very comfortable yetis can be quite a challenge.

Reverse the Roles

PCs are usually the invaders into the monsters' territory, breaking down the doors and attacking the inhabitants. What happens when the tables are turned?

The PCs hear that a group of weak mon-

sters, such as hobgoblins, have captured a marvelous treasure from travelers who came too near to the fortification. Eager to win some easy loot, the PCs conduct your standard slay-and-loom operation. "It's too easy," they think, as they survey their newly found treasure, and indeed it is too easy. A band of gnolls or ogres, or even giants has also heard of the hobgoblins' good luck, and they have come for the treasure that the PCs have just won. Now it is the monsters who are invading, and the PCs who are fighting a defensive battle. (This is when it pays to have picked locks rather than kicked in doors; doors that have been knocked off their hinges don't offer much defensive potential.) This scenario gives the PCs a taste, albeit brief, of what it's like to be in a dungeon when it is invaded by looters.



New Uses for Old Treasures

Gems and Jewelry

The main thing to remember about gems and jewelry is that they are worth exactly what someone will pay for them; they have no absolute or set value. In favor of ease of play, DM's usually gloss over this aspect of jewelry and let PCs "cash them in" at a set value.

The PCs find an incredible gemstone, such as a diamond the size of a fist. If the PCs try to cash it in, they have a problem: no one can afford it. The "hypothetical" value of the gemstone is so high that no one is willing to pay that much for it. Sure, a king could cash in his wealth and buy it, but why would he? He'd be left with an incredible gem and a big bite out of his treasury, money that he might need for military defense or expansion of his kingdom. Instead of cashing the gem in at the local jeweler's, the PCs need to find a wealthy collector, emperor or some other incredibly wealthy NPC to purchase it. To make things more complicated, there is no set price for the thing. No one is willing to pay its "book value," so the PCs are left trying to sell the thing for whatever they can get, which may involve visiting various wealthy people so they can see the gemstone for themselves and bid on it. If the PCs don't want to mess with this hassle, there may be a powerful merchant who could buy this gem from them for a much lower price, and then he would take the trouble to find the highest bidder, but doing so means the PCs lose out on lots of money.

Finding a buyer gets more complicated once various unscrupulous people learn that the PCs have the gem and try to get it through unorthodox means. The PCs may find that the effort required to keep thieves and bandits at bay makes getting rid of the gem even more imperative

Of course, an evil warlord or wizard offers to buy the gem for more than anyone else is offering, but can the PCs trust this evil person to pay honestly, or is the offer merely a trap?

Finally, even once the gem is out of the PCs' hands, the trouble is not over. Every panhandler, gold digger, cutpurse, conman, and cat burglar in the land has heard of this marvelous gem, and even if the PCs don't have it, they have the winnings. The PCs are suddenly subject to a great deal of unwanted attention.

One of the beauties of this adventure is that something that the players take for granted as an "off-stage" action (selling looted gems) suddenly becomes the center of role-playing. For maximum effect, play out the initial exchange with the gem merchant fully. Describe the jeweler's shop, the jeweler, and other customers (including, perhaps, a thief who is pretending to shop but is actually scoping the place for a hit). Describe the wide-eyed reaction of the jeweler. Does he pretend that the gem isn't that valuable after all ("poorly cut, full of imperfections"), become afraid that at any moment a band of thugs is going to break in to get that gem, or just faint dead away?

Gold Pieces

Compare these two exchanges:

DM: "The chest is full of gold coins."

Player: "Great! I start stuffing my backpack!"

DM: "The chest is full of gold coins, each stamped with the stern visage of Emperor Frankisto."

Player: "Really? What's on the reverse side?"

DM: "The image of Frankisto's Axe of Almighty Rulership, a legendary magical item whose whereabouts are unknown."

Player: "Great! I start stuffing my backpack!"

A minor difference, you may say, but sometimes isn't it precisely the small details that set excellent storytelling above the masses of good storytelling?

In many campaigns, gold pieces, as well as other coins and even gems and jewelry, can become as nondescript as experience points. One gold piece is exactly like every other one. Coins, however, are not blank. If an archeologist in the future were to look at our coins, he could tell a few things about our nation: men hold most or all of the highest positions of power, we believe in liberty and trust in God, the eagle is a national symbol, and our nation is composed of several different but united states. While this estimation may not be completely accurate, it does show how coins reflect the cultures in which they are made. What about coins that PCs find in their various escapades? When they first arrive in a new country, a quick look at the coinage might teach them something. Coins that a mysterious NPC uses might give a clue as to his place of origin. Coins from earlier historical eras of your game world give you a chance to solidify your campaign's history.

If you really want to make a point about coinage, imagine that the PCs perform a traditional looting of some ancient and cursed ruins, garnering a large portion of gold pieces in the process. When they return to the nearest city to divide the loot and use it to purchase new supplies, they quickly learn that the symbols stamped on those ancient coins are considered very evil in this kingdom. No one here will take these coins, even though they are valuable gold.

Perhaps the PCs can find someone who will melt the coins down for them, charging the appropriate fee, plus a danger bonus for working with "cursed" metal. (This, by the way, is another situation in which proficien-

cies such as blacksmithing or artistic ability: goldsmithing might be handy.)

Before melting the coins down, however, the characters learn that a distant land claims descent from the "evil" city whose ruins the PCs have just looted. The people of that land will gladly pay double or quadruple the face value of those coins because they regard them as valuable historical relics. Now the PCs have the opportunity to double their money or better. The only hitch is that they need to transport lots of gold coins cross-country, and news is likely to travel in underworld circles about this journey, if you know what I mean.

Works of Art

Even more than gems and jewelry, works of art are more than simply their value in gold pieces. With some thought, you can come up with several ways to show the PCs that a work of art is just that—a unique creation that must be treated a specific way.

Finding Your Market: Since works of art are not as "liquid" as gems and jewelry—in other words, the person who buys them from an adventurer can never be sure what the item will bring when re-sold—different buyers may offer different figures. For simplicity's sake, you can assume that the random value generated in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* is the "highest bid" that the characters find, but if you want to be more difficult now and then, you may find cause to invent works of art that are more valuable to certain people or in certain areas. For example, the works of art found in a certain set of ruins may date from a specific period. Is there a sage who specializes in that period, who would offer more than the local treasure-buyer?

Keepsakes: Create works of art that the PCs want to keep for themselves. For instance, a lute made of exotic, lustrous wood, decorated with gems or precious metals, might mean more to a bard as his personal instru-

ment than as a pile of gold. In fact, a "work of art" need not be made of precious materials. A Stradivarius violin, for instance, is valuable for its sound, not for its materials.

And any PC who has a fortress, temple, or other stronghold needs to furnish it in style. Statuettes, paintings, ceremonial weapons, and so on would greatly improve most strongholds.

Fragile Works: Imagine that, deep in a dungeon, the PCs find your campaign's equivalent to the Mona Lisa. A wondrous find, no doubt, but getting it past a red dragon's breath, a giant slug's spittle, or even the blades of a horde of kobold's may be something of a problem. Fragile works of art can include a mechanical nightingale made of silver, whose tiny moving parts can be ruined by harsh treatment; ancient wine whose jars can break; paintings on aged canvas; and so on.

Permanent Art: Imagine a giant bas-relief, carved with exquisite skill, and imbedded with jewels. The easy solution is to pop those gems out of the bas-relief and make off with them, but the relief itself may have tremendous historical or religious significance to people in the area. Defacing it leaves the PCs with a few more gems, but that is all. Could they clear the ruins where the relief is found and then sell them to interested parties? Could they turn the find over to the appropriate people, perhaps in return for other favors (Have the PCs ever had an archeological site named after them?)

Complete Your Set: The PCs find a chess set whose pieces are carved out of jade and rubies. An invaluable find, except that some of the pieces are missing. Finding the few missing pieces would double the value of the find, so now the PCs want to keep the set until they scour the rest of the dungeon for the remaining pieces. For a twist, let the PCs discover a few of the loose pieces first. If they unthinkingly sell them, then to complete the chess set that they find later, they have to find

the person who bought the loose pieces and buy them back (at a loss, of course).

Who Owns It?

Typically, a dungeon is in a "no-man's land" where "finders-keepers" is the only law. For a little fun, break that tradition. The PCs may find a large amount of treasure, or a very valuable item, only to learn that others have claim to those riches.

The local baron is descended from the people who lived in the ruins back at the height of their glory, and he considers all wealth found in the ruins to be "family heirlooms." In order to encourage adventurers to loot the place and recover his family's goods, he allows them to keep one-fourth, one-half, or three-fourths of the treasure that they find, but that is all. Enterprising PCs may decide to circumvent this heavy "tax" by sneaking into or out of the ruins, by teleporting treasure back home, or by hiding especially valuable items on their persons. Is the baron cunning enough to prepare for just such trickery?

A paladin who died in the Shivering Forest decades ago bequeathed her considerable magical arsenal to her children, who in turn bequeathed it to theirs. Anyone who finds these items are expected to hand them over to the rightful heirs in exchange for a nominal reward. Any who keep them for themselves are regarded as enemies of the church. It can get really tricky if there is some doubt as to whether a particular shield or sword or actually belonged to the paladin.

Skip the talk; a certain magical item does most certainly belong to the heir of its former owner, and the item knows it. The item insists on being taken to its owner, which requires that the PC do some research and travel across hostile territory. If you enjoy dramatic flair, the PCs get the item to the heir just when he needs it most, such as on the morning before a climactic battle.



Freestyle Campaigning

Imagine a movie in which the camera relentlessly follows the protagonists from scene to scene. Some movies, especially if they deal with psychological development within the protagonists (or, more likely, one protagonist), use this technique, but most switch from character to character. By cutting to different characters in different scenes, the director controls the pace, leaves the audience at cliffhangers, prolongs the suspense, and makes the movie more interesting to watch.

You can do almost the same thing in your game. While the typical AD&D® adventure consists of a team of adventurers meeting danger together, you can also have the adventurers be working separately, either in small groups or as individuals. The characters may then be acquaintances, strangers, or even enemies. This style can also be used as a change of pace, with characters who usually work together “in the wilds” pursuing individual goals while back in the relative safety of their home city. Naturally, a different style of play such as this calls for some new gamemastering skills, presents new challenges, and offers new opportunities for fun. We call this style “freestyle” gaming.

The main advantage to freestyling is character development. A typical adventure appeals to all the characters present by using a lowest common denominator: treasure, power, glory, fighting evil, or what have you. Most people, however, have more personal goals, those not shared by their friends. These could include running your family business successfully, persuading your true love to marry you, getting revenge on the bully that used to beat you up when you were a kid, finding another ancient statuette to add to your collection, and so on. It is a rare adventure that would get all the player-characters working toward one of these personal goals. By freestyling, however, you can allow characters to pursue idiosyncratic objectives on their own, thus giving the player more free-

dom to develop their characters.

Freestyling also allows a character's skills to come into play. A thief, for instance, may excel at spying on an evil Vizier, but would he want a fighter in plate armor clanking around with him while he's there? No. Rather than inventing an adventure that allows all the characters to work together, freestyling allows each character to fill his own special niche.

In addition, freestyling allows the DM to pay more “quality” attention to the characters. Each character may get no more time “in the spotlight” than normal, but that time will be for that character alone to do whatever makes sense for that character, not for the group as a whole. The personality, lifestyle, motivations, and history of the character can therefore be brought out in more depth through freestyling.

The benefits of freestyling, however, are not free. If you've always run characters as part of a group, you will have to learn new skills and familiarize yourself with new concepts, which is what the rest of this chapter is all about.

Setting Up For Freestyle Gaming

Not every adventure is equally suitable for freestyle gaming. When the characters are looting the Howling Pits of Ever-Twilight, for instance, they probably want to work closely together, at least if they value their lives. The following elements provide for exciting freestyling.

Wits over Force

In most adventures, force makes the difference between life and death, and characters of different races and classes should work together to share their various abilities and present the most effective combination of abilities to overcome deadly dangers. When an adventure depends more on what the character choose to do, rather than on what

they are capable of, then spells, weapons, and even level become less important. To get a good freestyle game, emphasize wits, subterfuge, mysteries, and role-playing.

Story-Oriented Players

Some players want to be “in the spotlight” all the time, preferably while defeating their enemies. These players may not be too happy while their characters are “off-stage” and someone else’s character has the attention of the Dungeon Master. Players who enjoy freestyle gaming, however, are more interested in character development and the creation of a good story. If in doubt, give this style a try and see how you players take to it.

The Character Group

The characters in play can represent several types of groups, depending on your preferences and those of the players.

Team Play

The characters are in the same party, just as if they were on a standard adventure together. During freestyle play, however, the characters are not physically together. This style works best if you want to use characters that have already adventured as a team.

They characters can be working toward the same goal, but it is a goal best handled by individual characters spreading out and handling different aspects of the task. For instance, imagine a party that arrives at a new city and needs to determine how deeply the servants of Set have infiltrated the city’s power structure. Thieves may want to spy on NPCs that may be involved, wizards may wish to talk to colleagues at a school or guild of magic, other characters may want to loiter in places that people gather to pick up rumors, someone may be assigned to sell

recently acquired treasure and buy provisions to outfit the party for the next stage of the mission, and so on. Of course, just because the characters say they are working toward the same end does not mean that they really are. The character who says she is “snooping for rumors” may actually go to a casino to gamble once the other party members are out of sight. More seriously, a party member or two may have secret goals that they need to pursue, even goals that run counter to the wishes of the group as a whole.

Sometimes, even when the characters generally work together, they may be on their own. This set-up works best when the characters are “home,” wherever that it. Each character has a life outside of adventuring that the player can now explore freely, without the demands of working with other party members. The incidents in which the characters take part may have no relation to each other, but the gaming session as a whole will cohere better if there is some common thread, such as preparations for and celebration of a city-wide festival.

Rivals and Enemies

For a real change, the characters may be enemies or rivals. A big advantage to this set-up is that the characters provide each other with challenges, and the DM does not need to worry as much about what the characters’ enemies are, since other players are taking those roles.

If you and your players pick this style, you may want to see to it that most of the rivalry is political rather than simply violent. When characters kill each other off, character development becomes very difficult and real-life feelings can easily get hurt. For non-lethal rivalry, the characters may compete for the hand of the princess, for political office, or for a monopoly in the local fur trade.

Strangers

This system is the best for taking advantage of freestyling. The characters do not know each other, other than, perhaps, by reputation (if the characters are important enough to be well-known). The characters pursue completely different goals, probably goals that the other characters would not be interested in. If the characters happen to meet, become friends, and decide that they have a common goal, they work together. Otherwise they may know each other but never do anything together, or know each other and play chess together but never do anything dangerous together, or even work at opposite goals, each without knowing the objectives of the other.

Starting the characters as strangers allows them to become friends, colleagues, enemies, rivals, or competitors if it makes sense according to who these characters are and what they are doing. As DM, you should insert plots and ideas that allow the characters to work together or against each other, but do not force them to do either.

Playing Freestyle

The central skill you need to freestyle well is "cutting" from scene to scene and character to character. How long should you deal with a single character? When is the right time to switch from one character to another?

Cliffhangers

Imagine that a thief has broken into a the Vizier's quarters in search of clues that would link the Vizier to the outlaw Priest of Set. He has just picked the lock on a hidden chest when the following exchange takes place.

Player: "I open the lid of the chest, very slowly."

DM: "In the dim light, you see a bundle of

scrolls and bluish gems, but before you can see more, you hear an ominous 'click' behind you, and suddenly the room is awash with light."

Player: "Uh, L..."

DM: "Cut to Ogroth [another character]. Ogroth, you found the Mercenary's Guild rather easily, but there's a huffy young guard at the door who says, 'We don't care for your type around here.'"

The player of the thief is at a cliffhanger, and the DM chose to cut at that time. Cutting at a cliffhanger can do several things for the adventure. Most obviously, it keeps the suspense high. The player of the thief is probably waiting desperately to see what has happened in the Vizier's chambers. By cutting at that point, the DM insures that tension remains high.

Critical Junctures

Ogroth, a warrior, has managed to gain an audience with the guild master of the Mercenary's Guild, but the encounter is more than Ogroth's character has bargained for. The guild master knows more about Ogroth's goal of fighting the priests of Set than Ogroth had imagined he would, and Ogroth does not yet know whose side the guild master is on. The following exchange takes place.

DM: "The guild master says, 'Your questions seem to indicate one of two possibilities. Either you are working for the priests of Set and are trying to determine what we in this Guild know about them, or you are working against them and want information to further your cause. I'll not answer any more of your inquiries, nor, indeed, shall I allow you to leave this hall, until you tell me what you know of the priests of Set, and where you stand in regards to their purposes.'"

Player: "Surely you are mistaken. I have only heard about the priests of Set while walking in the marketplace nearby. I know

nothing more than a few vague rumors. That is why I have come to you."

DM: "'You think I am a fool. Tell me what you know and who you serve immediately, or I shall be forced to consider you a dangerous enemy.' He motions to guards, about twenty of them, who lower their spears, point them toward you, and slowly advance. Cut to Kitarna."

Cutting at a crucial juncture like this is much like cutting at a cliffhanger, except that the player knows the situation fairly well. The main purpose this serves is to give the player time to think of a good answer. Perhaps you may regard this kind of cut as cheating, since it gives the player much more time to weigh odds and review clues than the character actually has. If this disparity offends your sense of justice, then this kind of cut is not for you.

Consider, however, the benefits in terms of storytelling that this cut allows. If Orgoth's player were forced to make a split-second decision, then he may very well make a stupid blunder and get Orgoth needlessly killed. But given the time to think out a proper response, the player may be able to invent a very good lie, or realize, based on previous clues, that the guild master is an enemy of Set, and that Orgoth therefore can tell the truth in safety. If Orgoth's player uses the extra time to make the right decision, then the story runs more smoothly and the player is happier because he succeeds. If the player makes the wrong decision, at least it is a mistake that makes sense according to the story as played out so far, and not a blunder made under duress.

Conclusion of Action

Player: "I duck into the stable and find a haystack or some other place to hide behind."

DM: "From your hiding place in the stable, you hear the guards charging by on the street.

They are calling to each other, and soon the calls and footsteps become more distant. The guards are gone. Cut to Faregni."

Cutting at the conclusion of an event is the opposite of cutting at a cliffhanger. The player feels good for having "gotten somewhere," even if that somewhere is just a smelly haystack. In addition, the player may be tired after an exciting interlude of play. Cutting at this point lets the player relax and think about what to do next. Keeping the players on the edges of their seats for four to six hours is probably too much for them. A cut like this allows a well-deserved break.

Mundane Break

Sometimes a character will be out of the action for mundane reasons, such as when the player wants to pore over the list of items available for sale and restock an adventuring pack, or when the player wants to run to the store to get munchies. These purely pragmatic breaks come quite naturally, and since you are freestyling anyway, they allow you to switch to another character quite easily.

"I Need to Think"

This break is roughly the opposite of the "Crucial Juncture" Cut, although sometimes a single cut will serve both purposes. In fact, it's best to disguise this cut as one of the above cuts. This cut allows you, the DM, to decide what happens next. Take this kind of cut when a player does something for which you are unprepared. For instance, in the example of the "Conclusion Cut" above, the character has escaped the town guard. Maybe the DM assumed that the character would be captured and had prepared some exciting events for that eventuality. Thanks to quick thinking, the character has escaped, and now the DM needs to think about what could hap-

pen next, and what this escape means to events going on behind the scenes.

You can also use this cut if you are ad libbing the adventure and you are not sure what to do next. Remember the "Cliffhanger Cut" with the thief in the Vizier's chambers? Maybe the GM had no idea what the click and the light mean. A gutsy DM can throw in an ominous event, cut away from it, and then trust that some good explanations for that event has presented itself by the time he cuts back to the player in question. Intentionally putting yourself on the spot like that might not be your style, but if you can manage winging it, then cutting from character to character can make it much easier by giving you a break from inventing ideas on the spot.

What the Players Do Off-Stage

When you cut from character to character, players are going to spend some time without characters of their own in the action. There are several ways to handle these players.

Secrecy

If you want to maintain secrecy for a character's action, you can send the other players away from the table or (better yet) take the player whose character is acting to another room where you can role-play unobserved. Since this option leaves the other players nothing to do, you should use it only when secrecy is very important, and when the other characters are together, so they can role-play among themselves while you are not there to run the non-player-characters. If you can get away with it, never using this option provides for the most fun for the playing group as whole.

Silent Observers

Generally, the players who are not in the spotlight can watch the action of those charac-

ters who are currently "on-stage." This allows them to continue enjoying the story even though they are not involved.

When players watch events that their characters do not witness, they will gain information that their characters do not have. Establish a rule for how players can use this information so the players know what the boundaries are. Basically, you have two options.

Ignorance: the players must play their characters without any influence from information that they have gained from watching other characters role-play. This system is fair, it reduces character feuds, and it is easy to enforce. It may not, however, be the most fun.

Benign Omniscience: the players can use the information they gain to make the story more interesting, but not for the benefit of their characters. The character, after all, does not know what the player knows. This option more closely simulates the action in movies. The director and writers, after all, know more than the characters and use that knowledge to place the characters in more interesting situations. You will have a problem with "benign omniscience" if the players cannot keep it benign. If they begin exploiting their information for their characters' benefit, you may have to revert to the "ignorance" option. Warn the players that this is the case, and they should be able to resist the temptation to exploit information that they have but that their characters lack.

A few specific examples may clear up the difference between ignorance and benign omniscience, and help you decide which you want to use.

Ogroth has been beaten nearly senseless, dumped in an alley, and covered with trash. His friends Faregni and Kitarna are looking for him in the area. Faregni's and Kitarna's players know that Ogroth is nearly unconscious, in an alley, and hidden under trash, but the characters do not know this.

Ignorance Option: The players say that the

characters are looking for Ogroth, and the DM has them roll against their Intelligence scores to see if they can locate him. The players cannot say something like "We check under the trash in the alleyways" because that would be exploiting information that the characters don't have.

Benign Omniscience Option: The players have their characters stop at the mouth of the alley and start talking.

Faregni's Player: "'Ogroth's not here like he said he'd be. Maybe something happened to him.'"

Kitarna's Player: "Ogroth can take care of himself. He's probably off somewhere chasing some dame or gambling away his share of last night's haul." I start eating an orange and throwing pieces of the peel into the alleyway."

Ogroth's Player: "Can I move or anything?"

DM: [rolls 3d6 and gets a score below-Ogroth's Constitution] "All you can do is moan."

Ogroth's Player: "Uunnhhhh..."

Faregni's Player: "'Did you hear something, Kitarna?'"

Kitarna's Player: "'Sounded like a sick cat.' I look down the alley and toss another orange peel into the pile of trash there."

Ogroth's Player: "Uunnnnnhhhhh"

Kitarna's Player: "'Might be rabid or something. Look, let's get out of here and check out the casino. I bet that's where Ogroth is'"

Faregni's Player: [to the DM] "I'm looking for a sick cat. Do I see anything?"

DM: [Rolls 4 dice against Faregni's Intelligence] "Well, Kitarna's last piece of orange peel seems to have landed on a human hand that is sticking out from under a big pile of rags, broken boards, and rotting food."

As you can see, the benign omniscience option allows players to creative and have a little more fun, but they need to be devoted to

a good story and good time shared by all, rather than to aggrandizing their characters

Jamming

One difficulty in running a city adventure in which everything is not planned out ahead of time is coming up with a host of interesting NPCs on the spot. If you cut from character to character, you have a reservoir of talented gamers who are currently not directly involved in the plot, and you can put them to good use. Let them spontaneously invent and portray random NPCs that the on-stage characters meet and interact with. When players portray impromptu NPCs, this is called "jamming."

Jamming is governed by the same sensibilities that keep benign omniscience in line: a concern for a good story, and the ability to resist the temptation to exploit your creative power

You will want to set at least some informal limits to what NPCs the off-stage players can portray to keep jamming from getting out of hand. For instance:

No Pre-Existing NPCs: If you have set up Magilor the Magnificent as a major NPC in your campaign, you may want to keep control over what he does. Jamming players cannot have Magilor pop up and act differently from how you want him portrayed

No Major Plot Influence: Jamming players cannot introduce NPCs that rescue, thwart, or kill PCs. Such interference would ruin the fairness of the game. A victory gained by jamming is hollow, and a defeat caused by jamming is unfair and intrusive.

No Super-Powerful NPCs: Even if an NPC introduced through jamming does not immediately influence the plot, a very powerful NPC may implicitly alter the power balance or background of your campaign. For instance, a powerful, evil priestess might be interesting to jam, but her presence may lead to unforeseen

consequences later on. How is she connected to the religions in the area? How do the powers that be view her? Who are her friends, allies, and enemies? As the DM, you might not want to deal with such unexpected elements being added to your campaign.

So what NPCs is it fair to create and jam with? Flirtatious barmaids, slapstick drunks, irritating bums, bratty kids, sullen barbarians, overworked peasants, loud street-vendors, stupid adventurers, gossiping townsfolk, bumbling wizards' apprentices, or even friendly dogs might be appropriate. Played with spirit, they can add some humor, color, and energy to a game. In addition, you get the rare privilege of being entertained. With a jamming player or two, you can sit back and watch the fun while the players interact.

Sometimes a jamming player presents what could be an interesting side plot: a virtuous NPC in trouble, a mysterious NPC who may or may not have something of value that the PCs want, a brawl instigated by a rowdy NPC, and so on. If you are comfortable with a free-wheeling style, you can adopt these possibilities into the adventure and run with them. At some point, you might even want to take control of the jammed NPC so as to control that NPC and direct the plot as you see fit. These NPCs may become recurrent characters in your series. If, however, you do not want to be distracted by side-plots, or if you do not want a carefully-designed campaign to be at the mercy of players who do not know what is happening behind the scenes, then feel free to tell the players that they should jam in such a way that side-plots do not present themselves.

Freestyle Adventures

The Bugbears

The king has signed an important peace treaty with an alliance of evil forces on the

kingdom's border, and as part of that treaty, an extended tribe of bugbears has been granted rights to live and work in the characters' city. (The king believes that bugbears will behave themselves because a certain baron has had good luck employing them as guards; see the next chapter.) The local government is not too happy about this turn of events, but the successful application of the treaty is very important to the king (and the king does not have to live with the bugbears).

What happens when bugbears move into the city? Thief characters may find that these newcomers are eager to infringe on the Thieves' Guild's territory. Warriors may find that human and demihuman warriors are out of work because the larger and more fearsome bugbears sell their services cheaply. Priests may be caught in a fight between churches or factions within a church over whether to accept the bugbears in the city and into their religion. And no matter what class a character is, a bugbear moving into the apartment upstairs can create a lot of fun and frustration. Or one's favorite tavern can change from a fun-loving, low-key hangout to a dive because so many bugbears like the place.

As an unexpected turn of events, characters who want the bugbears to leave may find a secret ally in the warlord of the bugbears, who fears that living in the city will make his people weak and vulnerable.

If your campaign is high-powered enough that a bunch of 3+1 hit dice bugbears cannot str things up, change the plot so that citizens of a very different (possibly evil) land come en masse to live in the characters' city. In addition to the clash of cultures, the newcomers may bring strange magic or religions, and the leaders of the immigration could be of high enough level to create a challenge to the powers that be.

Gamers are an incredibly varied group. This usually adds to the fun of the hobby. But being the person charged with melding these widely disparate individuals into a functional group can be daunting. As if this wasn't difficult enough, they also have to have fun at the same time.

This section begins by discussing some of the ways that gamers differ. Bear in mind that these are general statements only. Individuals are often the exception to the rule. Any resemblance to actual gamers, living, dead, or retired, is purely coincidental.

Age

The people who play games are of all ages. If you game for very long, you will meet, and have the opportunity to play, with gamers from eight years old to over seventy.

Generally, older gamers are less combat oriented than their young counterparts. This is partially a matter of temperament and partially a matter of knowledge. Older gamers have an appreciation for the fact that violence is a double-edged sword. It cuts both ways.

Older gamers also seem to have a better sense of the dramatic. Maybe this comes from growing up with classic movies for entertainment instead of slasher films.

Younger players on the other hand will sometimes be innovative enough to throw you completely off your pace. They are not so caught up in the knowledge that something can't work that they won't try it anyway. If the stereotypical "older gamer" is characterized by rationality, then young gamers are characterized by a free imagination. Young players are easily able to grasp the fact that this is fantasy. Just because something is true in real life



doesn't mean it always works in the AD&D game. This is a concept that more mature gamers can sometimes take a while to grasp.

If you have a wide range of ages in your gaming group, you have to see everyone's point of view. While an evening doing spell research and town business might be fine for an older group, younger players are going to be bored. Always try to have some short side plots for those players craving a little action.

Though it makes more work for you, try contacting players whose characters have private business that is liable to run long, separately. That way you avoid having most of your group waiting for one character to finish.

Another thing that can become a big problem if you let it is DMing for players who are older than yourself. If you are younger than some of your players there can be a tendency to defer to them in disagreements. This can be especially true for DMs who are in the fourteen to seventeen year range if the players in question are of your parents generation. If this problem arises it must be addressed immediately. No matter what the ages of the group, the DM is the DM and the final decisions are his. While occasionally asking advice from a knowledgeable player during a disagreement is reasonable, if you find yourself doing it constantly you need to remind yourself that the responsibility for decisions is yours.

All in all, having gamers of different ages in a group should be an opportunity to broaden your roleplaying experience not as an obstacle to be overcome. The secret is to treat everyone's opinion as worthy of respect and give everyone the chance to enjoy their own style of playing. This can be a complicated task for a DM. However, the rewards are well worth the effort.

Gender

A few years ago this would not even need to be addressed in a book of this type. For

many years, roleplaying games were a nearly exclusively male hobby. However, more and more female players and DMs are joining the hobby every year. You only have to attend any good sized convention to see the truth of this. Women are still in the minority in roleplaying and many female gamers still find that some male gamers seem shocked and a little uncomfortable when women are present at a gaming session.

So for those of you who are waiting for the big secret to gaming with members of the opposite sex, here it is. There aren't any secrets.

For male gamers who suddenly find themselves gaming with or DMing for female gamers, just treat them with the same respect you would any other gamer at the table. They aren't going to bite you. You might find the varied input in your games to be a big addition to the experience.

For female players or DMs who suddenly find themselves in a game with males of the "Oh my god, girls gaming!" school, it can be dealt with. Just play your character and assert yourself when necessary in a polite but firm manner and, sooner or later, the guys will relax and get back to enjoying the game. Males are trainable and can be gotten used to almost any situation, even gaming with women.

As for the differences between male and female gamers, there really aren't any. In general, women seem more interested in roleplaying than hack and slash, but there are some pretty bloodthirsty ladies at the gaming table too. It is true however that coming into the hobby kind of late hasn't slowed down any of the women gamers at all. Some of the best players and DMs you will have the pleasure to game with are women.

Experience

One of the most obvious differences between players which needs to be dealt with is that of gaming experience.

When DMing for new players, be prepared to explain your rulings. New players will obviously have less knowledge of the rules and some times fail to understand why things work the way they do. This is especially true in situations not normally dealt with in real life (like magic). Have patience with new players and let them make their own mistakes. Only give advice about situations when asked or when their characters would obviously know better. If you do not have an explanation why something they want to do wouldn't work think about it. One drawback of experience is the fallacy of, "everybody knows that doesn't work."

When helping new gamers choose a character, you might try to steer them toward rangers and thieves. These classes give a new player some special abilities to work with, without dropping them into spellcasting right off. However, if a new player really wants to play a mage or cleric, then don't forbid it. A low level spellcaster is not too complicated and if you have to spend a little extra time with the player, that is part of being a DM.

The thing to remember with more experienced players is to be flexible. Experienced players have seen spells, equipment, and character abilities used in every way possible and they will try to use them all. You cannot possibly prepare for every eventuality. The only solution is to be prepared to adjust the adventure at a moment's notice and go along as if the players did exactly what you expected.

Another problem with experienced players is that they are sometimes bored with a standard AD&D® game you will have to continually add new twists and surprises to your campaign to keep them interested.

Experienced players seem to fall into two camps when it comes time to choose characters. Those who always want to play something outrageous and those who only play a certain character class and that is all they want to play.

The way to handle the first group is to tell them that you will examine any concept for a character they want to try. If the rules change is fairly minor, (i.e. they just finished the Finders Stone Trilogy and want to try a halfling bard) just give it to them. If the changes are more major, (i.e. a new non-standard character class from some gaming magazine) offer them the following conditions: If you don't have a copy of the article they provide you with one. The two of you sit down and discuss any changes you feel are necessary before allowing the character. And most importantly, if the character becomes a disruption in the campaign it will be gotten rid of it with no argument. Most players that you have this discussion with will be completely reasonable about the whole thing. This procedure also works for someone who wants a non-standard magic item or spell.

Another dilemma for a DM is players who are more experienced than you are. Perhaps these players have even been DMing for longer than you. The thing to remember is that you can't be expected to know everything. Experienced players understand this. If you do your research when you write up adventures, try to keep yourself well prepared, and are willing to admit when you are wrong, most experienced gamers will be no trouble at all.

When introducing new players to AD&D, many people like to set up a campaign with other new players. They feel that this gives newcomers a chance to all learn together. This is not always the case. A new player can benefit a great deal from playing with more experienced gamers. New gamers can especially benefit from observing how the magic system can be utilized by an experienced player.

If you are trying to bring some new gamers into an existing campaign, first discuss it with the other players. Make sure they are willing to help with advice but know when not to advise also. Remind them that play will be

slowed occasionally for explanations and rules discussions. Above all make sure they are willing to show the new gamer the patience he or she needs at first. Nothing can sour a new player on the hobby like a bad first group.

On the plus side, if you and your players are willing to take the time to bring new players into the hobby they will reward you with fresh ideas and attitudes and help keep your campaign from becoming stale.

Gaming Styles

One of the hardest tasks for a DM is to juggle the various playing styles of a gaming group. There is no particular personality type that gamers fall into and their playing styles will reflect this. Some gamers are into hack and slash while some take delight in intricate puzzles and devious traps. Some want personal power for their characters and some just want to know things about the campaign world that the general populace doesn't. Some players will try to work out their character's backgrounds to the nth generation and some will be content with some stats and a general personality profile.

The DM's task is to make sure that all of these types of gamers have fun. Hopefully if you accomplish this, you will be having a good time in the process. A good campaign is a little like the real world, all things to all people. A wise DM will provide a good mix of action and puzzle solving. He will provide for those who desire intellectual stimulation and life threatening danger. Just because the Key to ancient treasures is solving an ancient riddle that doesn't mean there aren't physical obstacles to cross too.

The best way to do this is to make your world as detailed as possible but don't be offended if some of the players don't care about the details. Someone will want to know nearly everything you write down. That way

you will be ready for those who want to know the complete history of the neighboring kingdoms' ruling families and also for those players who think that in depth study of the campaign setting means asking about the menu at the next inn.

One of the ways to bring a group of gamers with differing styles together is to make sure that they need each other to succeed. Perhaps their path to a treasure can only be found by someone with an exhaustive knowledge of the world's history. The key to unlocking the gate may be hidden in a strange riddle that only a true puzzle solver can unlock. The role-players may be needed to negotiate with the tribes who control access to the dungeons. The final battle may only be winnable by someone with the heart of a power gamer who knows how to combine all of the party's magic items and abilities into an unstoppable combination.

The key is to recognize the strengths of your players and make sure each of them is necessary to the plot. Never make players feel they aren't needed in a quest. This will lead to bored, dissatisfied players in very short order. Every character needs his or her chance to shine.

Problem Personalities

As was stated before, gamers do not fall into any specific category in their personalities. While some would like to believe that all gamers are calm, rational, confident, intelligent, and unfailingly cheerful, we will have to admit that this does not always hold true.

There are gamers who are grandstanding, stubborn, argumentative, short tempered, and even (as hard as it may be to believe) painfully shy. Each of these type of people must be dealt with in his own way.

The grandstanding gamer is always out for his character's glory. In a true heroic tradition, he needs to be the one who handles every sit-

uation. This even extends to explaining to other players what actions their characters should take. Sometimes this is a self-correcting problem. The character takes on more than he can handle and has to be pulled out of trouble by his comrades (much to their amusement), or the other players take him in hand on their own.

The main danger is that the DM will let the glory hound monopolize his time and fails to pay proper attention to other characters. This will quickly lead to resentment of the DM and of the offending player. A good DM will always spread his attentions around enough to keep all players involved in a scenario. Stroke the ego of the grandstander enough to keep him enjoying the game but not at the expense of the other players.

Argumentative players can be a DM's nightmare. These players are usually not unpleasant under most circumstances. They just have certain points that they are sure that they are right about and can't understand why you won't be reasonable. Some players refuse to acknowledge the rules in certain situations because they are sure that circumstances would not occur like the rules stated. These arguments usually stem from the fact that we are dealing with a fantasy world. Occasionally, game mechanics will demand that something work differently than it would in the real world and some players have trouble accepting this. This is especially a problem when the situation deals with an area of their expertise. Never try to discuss combat injuries with a paramedic.

The only way to handle a player who will not drop an argument is to be firm. The first time a situation like this occurs, let everyone know that you are open to reason. Tell the players that if they feel one of your rulings is in error that you will always discuss it. Then, after listening to both sides, you will make a final ruling. Stress that the operative word is final. Sometimes your final ruling will be in

error. This is nearly always better than letting a whole evening of gaming be wasted in arguing. This will only work if you are willing to be flexible. A good DM has to be able to admit when he is wrong gracefully. The players will respect you for it.

Another good technique to remember is to be willing to give in on the small things even when you are right. If a situation has no major affect on the game, let the players have their way. That way when you have to stand your ground, the players will be a little more willing to understand.

There are also problems that might not be problems. One type of "problem" player is one that occasionally slips out of character to make an amusing side comment. This can break the rhythm of play at times, but it can also lighten tension. Before talking to these players about their attitude, you need to ask yourself if the side comments add to or detract from the fun. If these incidents occur too frequently, they can become frustrating to the DM and players over the long term even if they are momentarily amusing. However, if used once in a while slips out of character can add to the enjoyment of the game. Remember, gaming is a social activity and an occasion for fun. Too much seriousness can detract from this.

Plain bad temper can be another problem, especially with a regularly scheduled campaign. Sometimes everyone has a bad day and they come to a session in a lousy mood. The important thing is to recognize this and be understanding. After all, if you are in a campaign with people you are hopefully friends, be willing to take someone aside and talk about whatever is bothering them. If it is just not a good night to game people need to be willing to do something else. Even the most rabid roleplayers need a change of pace once in a while.

A truly shy gamer, while a rarity, is something that must be dealt with on occasion.

Many people who are shy or self-conscious in their daily lives take up roleplaying or theater as an outlet. This gives them a chance to be confident or daring by playing a part. While it is up to the DM to make sure that a shy player participates, you should never do this by putting them on the spot. Nothing is more frightening to someone who is truly shy than to suddenly find themselves in the spotlight.

Give the shy player a chance to give their input but do not demand it. If the shy player has a particular interest you could write it into a scenario and give them the chance to be the expert. At first you should focus attention on a shy player in fleeting moments. Give them the opportunity to speak but if they are not willing to keep things flowing smoothly. Do not make what may be an awkward moment for them even more awkward with an obvious break in the pace.

If you provide the opportunities and a little gentle encouragement, a shy player will eventually feel comfortable enough to participate fully. Enough patience is all it takes.

There are also those gamers who refuse to roleplay. These are the people who treat their like a playing piece instead of a personality. They habitually state their character actions in the third person ("Franko goes up to the orc and swings his sword." "I'll have Franko ask the peasants what they want. "). This can undercut the suspension of disbelief for the other players and detract from their enjoyment.

The DM has to find ways to bring these players into the spirit of the AD&D® game. Sometimes, sitting down and talking to the player privately can be all it takes. Perhaps the player just doesn't know what is involved in roleplaying a character and needs a few hints. Other players are a more obstinate. Whether from an inability to understand roleplaying or just because they prefer to play this way, they just will not take a hint. The DM needs to use other methods to encourage everyone to get

into the spirit of the game. You can only allow NPCs to respond to characters who deal with them in character, extra experience can be awarded for good roleplaying, or bonuses can be given to the chance to perform certain actions (i.e. nonweapon proficiency checks) for describing actions in the proper heroic mode. I brace myself against the stone wall and concentrate every ounce of strength to bending the bars to allow my comrades to escape, might have a better chance for bend bars/lift gates than Franko will go over and bend the bars so they can get out of the cell. These methods can be used subtly but sooner or later the problem player will get the hint. Once the player gets into the mood of things they will find that the game is more enjoyable for them and everyone else involved.

Convention Gaming

Now that we have covered the player types, let's discuss some of the various situations a DM can find himself judging in. Convention gaming both in tournament play, and running pick-up games has its own pitfalls that are different than those normally seen in campaign play.

An obvious problem in running games at a convention is that you will probably not be judging for people you know. In a campaign, while you may find all types of players, at least you have some idea of what kind of people you will be dealing with. Literally anyone can sit down to play at your table at a convention.

The bad news is that you will almost never get a homogenous group at a convention. There is almost always the risk of personality conflicts at the game table.

The good news is that the players usually know this when they decide to attend. One of the reasons to attend a gaming convention is to play with different types of gamers. The other thing that convention attendees know is that if they don't get along with someone at

the table, they only have to play with them for one session. Maybe it will make them appreciate their group at home all the more.

This doesn't mean your job as a DM is easy. The players usually have paid to be at the convention and have often gone to a bit of expense to travel there also. They have every right to expect a good time.

If you are going to run an event you wrote, try to build in flexibility. Be willing to accommodate a wide range of playing styles and to compromise on disagreements. It is even more important at a convention to avoid wasting time with needless arguments. Time is limited and one of the most important things to remember is to keep the game moving. This doesn't mean you have to push the players if they are having fun with a certain situation. However, you need to prevent the action from getting bogged down. Remember, people are at a convention to have fun. This includes you. If you do your best to have fun running a game, the people playing will probably have fun too.

You need to be a fairly quick judge of character to run games at conventions. A good convention judge needs to be able to figure out the players as soon as he can and adjust the event accordingly. All of the techniques mentioned above are valid for conventions too. You just have to apply them on the fly.

These are all things that come with practice, but a few tips will help you keep things under control. For one thing, some DMs like to wander around the table while they judge. This accomplishes several things. It allows them to hear all of the players (conventions are sometimes noisy), it makes it easier to spread their attention around to all of the players, it keeps them from getting restless and inattentive, and it makes it easier to unobtrusively pass or receive notes during play in case something needs to be communicated privately between judge and player. This habit can sometimes be disconcerting to players at first but they soon

become used to it.

Another tip is to avoid letting parties become separated during convention play. While this can be a trifle boring for a campaign group, running back and forth between separate groups can quickly eat up all the playing time at a convention.

Keep breaks to a minimum also. While a short break in the middle of a session can allow everyone to resume play refreshed (especially late in a convention) it can also disrupt the flow of play and eat up time. Five minutes in the middle of a gaming slot should be sufficient.

Tournament Play

When running tournaments at a convention you will usually not be running your own material. Hopefully, you will receive the module sufficiently before the convention to familiarize yourself with it. A good method is to give tournament modules a quick read-through to get the overall flavor of the adventure, then go through the module with a highlighter to mark things you want to look up or pay extra attention to during the game. This is also a good time to jot down questions you might have about the scenario. When you arrive at the convention you can ask the tournament coordinator about any questions at the judge's briefing. That way if you can't get a question cleared up at least all of the DMs can adjudicate it the same way.

One of the things that is often a problem for judges of a tournament is that they cannot be as flexible as in normal play. The players are competing for prizes and each session needs to be run the same way. This is especially true in team advancement rounds. While a little flexibility can be enjoyable too much prevents an event from being run fairly.

This is not as true in individual advancement events such as those run by the RPGA® Network but even there a certain level of con-

sistency is necessary. This is especially necessary in multi-round events where players need to rely on information learned in earlier rounds.

This lack of flexibility is offset by two things. One, the players in a tournament are usually expecting this style of play. They will usually not expect you to change things to suit their mood. They will understand that sometimes things have to work a certain way in the interest of fairness. Also in a tournament which has been running for more than one or two years, people sign up for them expecting a certain type of gaming experience. Two, Tournaments are almost always written for a specific set of characters with carefully written backgrounds and motivations. The players will therefore be apt to respond to the module in certain ways to stay in character. The characters will usually have magic items and abilities which support this. Most tournament modules are edited by someone to encourage this.

If you wish to write your own tournaments, you should either get in touch with the management of a local convention or work through an organization such as the RPGA® Network. It is difficult enough to run a single session event of your own at a convention without trying to set up a tournament structure on your own. Conventions organizers can tell you what the local gamers are looking for in tournaments, provide space, help arrange judges, and usually even arrange for prizes. The RPGA can aid in all of these areas and also provide you with tournament writing guidelines. These guidelines have been worked out over several years of tournament play and can be a tremendous help.

Pick-up Games

Occasionally at conventions, a DM will be asked by players with time on their hands to run a pick up game. Unlike other games run at conventions these are usually extremely

free-form. Sometimes a judge will not even have something planned in advance but will just improvise using ideas from a past campaign. If you are up to spur of the moment adlib judging these games can be fun. However they can be a strain on the DM. If you have never done this type of thing before you might want to think twice about it. This is the type of activity better practiced by those who have been DMs for a number of years and have a wealth of experience to draw on.

One advantage of this type of game is that it allows you to adapt the play to the players very quickly. With no set structure, you can easily change directions on a whim. This can be extremely enjoyable if all participants are in the proper mood. Since the pick up game is intended as a time filler people tend to not be extremely serious when participating.

If you plan on running this type of thing at a convention, some preparation can be helpful. It is best to have made up a few characters beforehand or at least to have some rules for allowing players to create and supply characters on the spur of the moment. Be prepared to adjudicate this carefully, as some people will insist on trying to come up with truly outlandish characters. You should have a system for handing out or allowing players to pick magic items worked out ahead of time. This will save a lot of time and allow everyone to begin playing as soon as possible.

Summary

All in all, being a Dungeon Master is a rewarding experience. This is true whether you judge in a campaign or at conventions or both. Each style of play and all types of players have their own sets of problems and rewards. With a little patience and hard work, you will find few pastimes as stimulating or enjoyable. Wherever you judge or for whom, there is really only one cardinal rule to remember. Everyone is there to have fun.



Now that we have explored some of the problems and techniques of running a game, let's take a tour around some of TSR's published campaign worlds. Starting with a published world can save you much effort and time. You have the benefit of knowing that the world has been play-tested for completeness and compatibility with the AD&D® rules. Also your players will usually have some familiarity with published worlds and can pick up the flavor of the campaign more easily. Each of these worlds contains large areas to customize so you can make them fit your individual taste or campaign.

The entry for each campaign setting will contain some common elements. These will include:

Flavor: This will touch upon the mood of the world. The overall feel of things and an idea of the type of campaign you might set there.

Unique Areas: This will detail not only physical locations but special rules and other details which set this world apart from the others.

Mysteries: Here we will look at things which may intrigue your players. These mysteries will generally be things that may never be understood. These are questions to build your campaign around, not single adventures.

Personalities: This section will mention famous NPCs or monsters that your players may have heard of in other TSR products. Since all of these personalities are detailed elsewhere, they will only be mentioned here perhaps with possible adventure hooks.

The Mundane: Here we examine those things that these world have in common. These are things to downplay if you wish to make the campaign feel truly unique or to mention if the characters need to be reassured with a touch of the familiar.

The FORGOTTEN REALMS® Setting

This setting encompasses several distinct areas that will be dealt with individually. However, we will begin with the north-central region of Toril, and work out from there.

The Core Realms

Flavor: The Forgotten Realms are, for the most part, a generic AD&D setting. There is the mood of a frontier about much of it, but the large cities are as civilized and opulent as anyone could wish for. The central lands are well detailed and heavily settled. However, there is still sufficient wilderness to place any adventure you wish to run. The lands in this area are populated with independent groups that each have their own cultural background and a feeling of nationalism which fosters a friendly (or sometimes not so friendly) rivalry between neighboring cities. The countries are small with many independent cities between them.

Unique Areas: The most noteworthy areas in the central lands are the wild magic areas and the dead magic areas. Both of these phenomena can be used to give your players a jolt when they have become overconfident in their abilities, especially spellcasters.

Wild magic areas will cause the spells they have come to rely on to behave in an erratic and sometimes deadly manner.

Dead magic areas have no effect on permanent magic items or spells already in effect when the area is entered. Only spells (whether cast by a character or from an item) are prevented from working.

If the warriors and rogues in your campaign have been feeling a little put upon by the mages and clerics they might enjoy a brief sojourn into one of these regions.

The other unique quality of this setting is the behavior of the gods. This portion of the Forgotten Realms is the setting for the Avatar

Wars. During that time, the deities of Toril took human form and walked the realms creating great havoc and destruction among the populace. A campaign could be set during this time with the PCs being recruited by one or another of the powers to aid them in this battle.

Mysteries: Some mysteries of this region include the area of Myth Drannor (as yet largely unexplored) and the great desert of Anauroch.

The Elves supposedly left great stores of treasure and magic in Myth Drannor when they left. It is certain that the area contains foul monsters and great dangers.

The great desert was supposedly created in a battle between powerful mages. No one knows the true story of the conflict or what powerful magic may have been left behind by wizards of such power.

Either of these areas contains the seeds of several adventures. The mysteries surrounding them are just detailed enough for you to build on. After that your imagination is the only limit.

Personalities: Various heroes nearly too numerous to mention have been written about in the game products and books set in the Forgotten Realms. These include Elminster the irascible sage that no one ever sees and his scribe who makes sure that no one ever sees him. The heroes of the Icewind Dales trilogy, the Moonshae Isles trilogies, the Finder's Stone trilogy, the Cleric Quintet, the tales of Drizzt Do'Urden, and the Harper series.

Several groups of villains make their homes in the Realms also. These include the Zhen-tarim, the Red wizards of Thay, and numerous individual villains of all sorts.

Perhaps the most useful group is the Harpers. While an adventuring party could meet and aid any of the personalities in the above books, the Harpers are mysterious enough to fuel any adventure you want to send the characters on. They have interests in all the lands of Toril and enemies as well. As

patrons they do very well. They offer rich rewards, a just cause and perhaps eventually the chance to join their exalted ranks.

The Mundane: Since the Forgotten Realms is a standard AD&D® setting as far as rules go, it is easy for a DM to fall into the trap of neglecting those aspects which make it unique. The personality of the Realms lies in the inhabitants. Failing to use these to the best advantage loses much of the benefit in this setting. The heroes that have been written about in the Realms are not legendary. They are all current. These adventures are happening now. People will speak to the characters about them and they may even meet them. This is what makes Toril a special world.

AL-QADIM™ Campaign

This area is set far to the south of the core areas of the Forgotten Realms. It has a separate personality and for most campaigns will stand alone.

Flavor: The AL-QADIM setting partakes of the Arabian Nights and the Voyages of Sinbad. All of the color and vibrancy of those tales is here. A campaign set in the Land of Fate will seem familiar to your players from those stories but will continually surprise them with odd twists to the familiar AD&D rules. The tone is larger than life. If you want a campaign filled with heroes of legendary stature this is a good place to start. From the haggling of the bazaar, to the tales of the Hakima, the characters will be surrounded with the flavor of the middle east.

There are Giants and Djinn everywhere to aid and confound the heroes. The supernatural and the mundane live side by side. This world has an entirely different flavor from any which were previously published. If you have a group which is growing tired of their present campaign you should give Zakhara a try.

Unique Areas: The entire setting is unique. There are several new character kits for jaded

players, new nonweapon proficiencies, new weapons, new monsters, new religions, new spells and new rules for everything from living under the Hand of Fate to buying supplies.

Two of the things characters will have to deal with are the Hand of Fate, and station.

Fate is a direct force in the lives of the people of Zakhara. Fate is not exactly a deity but it sometimes acts like one. To act contrary to the dictates of Fate is to invite disaster. However, this does not mean that characters have no control over their futures. The belief in the forces of Fate is not fatalism, but realism. A certain path is set for one's life but there is much room for choice along that path.

Station is one's status in life. This is not rigid like a caste system. One's station can be changed by one's actions. However, your present station determines how others view you and how well you are treated by those around you.

The Djinn of Zakhara are also a unique group. They resemble the Djinn of other AD&D® settings but they have a personality all their own, and a culture which deals constantly with that of the *Ins* (the mortal races). Instead of being a group of rare creatures as in other game worlds, the djinn of Zakhara are a part of daily life. Children can relate the proper greetings for the different races and orders of Djinn and tell you how to recognize them.

Mysteries: Zakhara is a fairly new setting and many of the great mysteries have not yet been revealed. One that is present is the force of Fate. How is it that the gods who rule so strongly in other lands have such little power here? Why does the Hand of Fate cast its shadow so strongly over Zakhara while being barely recognized in the lands of the Ajami? These are thoughts to occupy the wise which will surely be revealed in the fullness of time. For truly it is written that we have no fate but the fate which is given us.

Personalities: There are as yet no heroes written up for the AL-QADIM™ setting like there are for other worlds. As the newest AD&D setting little has been written about specific characters as yet. The mysterious Loregiver is mentioned but that entity is rather vague.

Since an AL-QADIM campaign draws so heavily on the Arabian Nights and the Voyages of Sinbad, nearly any character from those stories could be used. Perhaps the characters could fall in with Sinbad himself, or Aladdin, or Ali Baba and not realize it until they are deeply enmeshed in one of their plots.

The Mundane: The most noticeably mundane in the AL-QADIM sourcebooks is the presence of "Ajami" character kits. These are characters brought from more standard realms to Zakhara. Their use is strongly discouraged. If you are going to set your campaign in Zakhara, use the Al-Qadim kits. This will provide your players with the full experience of roleplaying in the Land of Fate. Why be tourists when you can experience the life of a native?

Kara-tur

Kara-tur lies southeast of the core areas of the Forgotten Realms. It can be reached, but not easily enough to promote a great deal of interaction. Characters in the central regions can gather a lot of information about Kara-Tur but no one knows truth from legend.

Flavor: This area is a mixture of oriental cultures. There are elements of medieval Japan, China, and Mongolia all mixed. Enough is familiar so that most players will feel comfortable, but there are enough differences to give your players a new feeling. If your players are interested in oriental cultures this would make a good experience for them.

The atmosphere is refined in the cities, wild and untamed in the steppes. Shou-Lung shows the inscrutable calm mask of the orient.

which may hide anything. Foreigners may never penetrate the mask but one can try

The steppe barbarians are an entirely different culture. They are wild and untamed with all the power and rough honor of the Mongol hordes. Western characters may be viewed with suspicion, but they can win a place among the clans if they show courage

Unique Areas: The most individual aspect of this setting is the culture. Western characters will be dismayed to learn that they are considered uncultured barbarians. They have no social standing and no family or honor to give them any. The most difficult thing to deal with is the concept of honor and face as it is meant in Kara-Tur. This will be outside of the experience of most characters

Several rule modifications set this world apart. New monsters abound here as do new character races, character classes, spells and abilities. Several rules deal with the oriental concept of honor. Nearly everything that a native character does affects his or his family's honor. One's level of honor must be carefully maintained for certain character classes (notably Samurai). Any stain to one's honor must be wiped clean, sometimes with blood.

The new character races are notable particularly the spirit folk which bear many similarities to regular AD&D® Elves but are different in several aspects.

Religions differ here with the concepts of the celestial bureaucracy and Kami (nature spirits) to complicate your character's lives.

Most classes have restrictions on their actions which complicate play even more. This is an enjoyable setting, but it is best suited to those who value roleplaying over combat

Mysteries: For western characters, the whole culture of Kara-Tur is a mystery. Dealing with the government and customs to get through daily life is an adventure. If one insults the wrong people, he could find himself challenged to a duel on the spot, or shunned and

unable to purchase food or lodging.

If the characters are delegates from the lands to the west, they must unspool miles of red tape to present their credentials to the proper authorities. If one should take the wrong path through this bureaucratic jungle, then one must start all over again tomorrow. So sorry.

Personalities: There are no real personalities detailed for this region as for the central lands. One place to find personalities and campaign hooks are the films of Akira Kurosawa. If you have not seen these movies, they are on the suggested viewing list. A copy of *Bushido* (the way of the warrior) or the *Art of War* by Sun Tzu are handy references. These are available at most large book stores, and will give you a start on the cultural setting involved

The Mundane: As with the Al-Qadim setting, shy away from using western characters. To give a campaign set in Kara-tur a truly oriental flavor, encourage your players to choose native character classes.

This is not as much of a problem in Kara-Tur as in Al-Qadim. To give your players a taste of being strangers in a strange land, read *Shogun*. The problems of fitting into an oriental culture on the fly are well detailed. Of course, the PCs may have *tongues* spells and the like but these can't be running all the time.

Maztica

This area lies to the west of the core areas of the forgotten realms. Unlike the two previous lands, there is no overland connection between Maztica and the rest of the Forgotten Realms. The only access is via a long sea voyage

Flavor: Maztica is South America during the time of the Conquistadors. The forces of Waterdeep are moving in to explore and exploit the lands of several tribes of indians. They are searching for gold, magic and other treasures.

While not quite as brutal as the conquest of South America, the explorers from Waterdeep are no less greedy; they are looking for riches and no one is to be allowed to stand in their way.

From the side of the conquerors, it is a time of great opportunity. There are fortunes to be gained and titles to be won. Those who acquit themselves well may be given dominion over the new lands. The churches of the Realms have sent missionaries to save souls and deal defeat to deities hostile to their own.

From the view of the native people, their entire way of life is under siege. Their lives were far from perfect, but their lives were their own. They will defend their culture with any means at their disposal. They will fight the invaders while searching for a place where they can live in peace far from the monsters from over the sea.

Unique Areas: Aside from the overall cultural aspect of the whole area which is unlike any other game world on the market, the magic system of the Mazticans adds a whole new element to the game. The Plumaweavers (the good guys) and the Hishnashapers (the bad guys) have a whole set of new spells and magic items to delight or frustrate your players, depending on which side they are fighting on. The other new classes are the Jaguar Knights and the Eagle Knights. These warriors are able to shape-change for battle using the magic of pluma or hishna.

This, coupled with a wealth of new non-weapon proficiencies, new deities, and a culture of which most of us know little or nothing, can provide a whole new experience in roleplaying.

The religious aspects of Maztican life can provide whole adventures. Unlike other



AD&D® worlds, the battle between good and evil deities is immediate and constant. The fighting between the gods takes place all around you and there are no non-combatants.

Mysteries: The main mystery is the seeming betrayal of the Maztican people by their gods. The deities, good and evil alike, are seen in the novels set in this area as taking no real steps to protect their people from the invaders. This could lead characters to search for answers from the gods themselves or perhaps to search for some higher power who will protect their people. This could be a problem since the new gods would not only have to defend them from the invaders of their land but from the old deities also.

Another mystery is the ancient subterranean passages which once linked this continent with those to the east. Perhaps they were not all sealed in ancient times or it might be possible to reopen them, providing access to ancient secrets or ancient evils.

Personalities: While the list of personalities for this area of the Realms is not as extensive as that for the core lands, there were several NPCs detailed in *Ironhelm*, *Viperhand*, and *The Feathered Dragon*. A group of characters could link up with any side in this conflict.

Several extensive adventures could be written either helping to conquer this savage land or defending the people from the invaders. These work equally well for standard or native characters.

The Mundane: You should stay away from running standard characters on the side of the conquerors. This makes the campaign a standard exploration of the jungle with some new monsters to deal with.

If you want to play in Maztica, go the whole route with native characters and all. If your players insist on standard character classes, at least get them to play renegades on the side of the natives. This will put a bit of a new slant on things and give them some exposure to the new culture.

The DRAGONLANCE® Setting

Krynn is the world of the DRAGONLANCE saga. You are probably at least somewhat familiar with it from the books, modules, comics, etc., that have been published set on this world.

Flavor: Krynn is nearly a normal AD&D world. There are enough differences however that it stands somewhat apart from the rest. Krynn is a world caught up in a battle between two gods. Takhisis, the Dark Queen and Paladine, the Holy Warrior have been locked in a struggle for millennia. The last time they battled, Takhisis was locked away from this world and now she wants to come back.

Krynn is a world where the epic struggle between good and evil is taking place all around you and everyone is caught up in it.

Legends are coming to life all around you and no one knows what to expect next. Creatures unseen for so long that they were thought to be myths are reappearing and new creatures never before heard of are springing to life.

Ordinary people are suddenly becoming heroes, and you may be next.

Krynn feels like an old world. Knowledge of things that happened thousands of years ago is commonplace. Relics of ancient times are suddenly being reborn and used in the battle against evil. The world is in flux and anything might happen.

Unique Areas: A minor thing which will often catch players by surprise is that gold has almost no value. The monetary system is based on a steel standard. This is linked to the cataclysm in some bizarre manner.

Also dragons are divided into two groups even more than in other AD&D settings. The good dragons are solidly on the side of man helping to fight the battle against the evil dragons who side with Takhisis. This is symbolized by the portrayal of Takhisis and Paladine as the Chromatic and Platinum dragons respectively.

Another thing that can be a surprise to players is that in the early products, true clerics are unknown. They are never really common, but at least they are available later on. This is because the worship of the true gods is almost forgotten.

One other thing that players may be interested in is the opportunity to play minotaurs as a character race. They have a very detailed culture and history. This can be rewarding for a player who relishes a new roleplaying challenge. They also make great warriors for someone who is into hack and slash.

Mysteries: For a campaign which follows the DRAGONLANCE® saga, there are mysteries everywhere. Where did the dragons disappear to, why did they return, how does Raistlin fit in with the Cataclysm, who is the mysterious man with the emerald in his chest and why does Takhisis want him so badly?

There are abandoned towers of sorcery to explore, Dragonlances to find, and the secret of the true gods to find. How did the gods ever think of Kender and how do you keep them out of your pockets?

Mysteries abound on Krynn. Unfortunately, there has been so much written about Krynn that nearly all the mysteries have been answered.

If you can find a gaming group unfamiliar with Krynn there is more material than you could use in a dozen campaigns. If your players are familiar with Krynn, then the material is still there; you just have to be a bit more creative in using it. The path of the heroes of the lance is probably out, but they weren't the only thing going on in the war. You can use the war as a backdrop to your campaign instead of the focus. There were plenty of missions to accomplish during and after the war. Involve your players in some of them.

Personalities: Like the other areas, there is a wealth of information on personalities of Krynn. There are literally dozens of people detailed in the various books and game prod-

ucts set on Krynn. The only problem is choosing which ones to use.

Avoid the better known characters and use some of the bit players. Nearly everyone will recognize the Heroes, but imagine your players' reactions when they realize that they have been traveling with Uncle Trapspringer, or fighting alongside Gregor Uth Matar. There are more than enough NPCs to go around and they are drawn from all time periods in Krynn's history so some will be around no matter when you set your campaign.

The Mundane: This may sound odd, but a good idea for a fresh feel to your game would be to set a campaign based on Krynn at a time different than the War of the Lance. The best choice would be just before or just after the cataclysm. This time period is sufficiently detailed in several books and game products to be easily manageable as a campaign setting but would hold a few surprises for your players. The War has been written about so often that most players would have too good of an idea what was happening next, but the cataclysm could be an interesting time to live.

The SPELLJAMMER® Setting

The SPELLJAMMER campaign setting connects all the other worlds in a way. You can reach almost anywhere that there is an AD&D® campaign world by way of a spelljamming vessel.

Flavor: SPELLJAMMER is AD&D in outer space. That is the easy explanation but like most easy answers it is incomplete. SPELLJAMMER is about exploration. There are pirates, but you can find pirates on the ocean. There are strange new races, but you can find those on nearly any campaign world if you look hard enough. SPELLJAMMER allows you to go anywhere you want to go, even places you didn't know you wanted to go.

Spelljamming is a mysterious and exciting adventure in worlds where the mysterious

has become mundane. A group of adventurers who has explored all there is on their world can suddenly go to a place with all new surprises. Even players who know about all of the campaign settings available can suddenly be taken to places where they don't know all the rules. The DM can create new worlds of fire or ice, or worlds that are flat or round or toroid. You can set up any natural laws you want and send your players out to deal with them. Your players can be caught up in conflicts spanning dozens of crystal spheres that they didn't even know existed.

Unique Areas: The whole idea of spelljamming is unique. There are new races and classes to play, new worlds to explore, and new treasures to find.

The system for ship to ship combat adds new dimensions to the game. With all of the different types of ships, there are a multitude of combinations to explore in just this one area.

There are new races to oppose also. You can take your players into the lair of the hated Neogi to wipe out their nest and rescue their slaves. For high-level groups there are ships full of beholders or mind flayers to battle.

The characters could be the crew of an elven exploration vessel. They could be searching out new allies in the war against the Scro or be flying recon to provide early warning of an enemy fleet massing for the attack. They could be smugglers dodging the Elven Armadas that patrol the space lanes. The possibilities are vast.

Mysteries: The biggest mystery in Wildspace is the Spelljammer, that mysterious ship that is semi-legendary on most of the known worlds. It is held in awe by everyone who has knowledge of it and considered a deity by some. Its arrival in a sphere is said to be a portent of momentous changes, whether of good or ill none can say.

This sentient ship is so ancient that no one knows its origin. It is known that it travels all over Wildspace looking for those who are

worthy to be its captain but no one knows why.

The Spelljammer is feared and coveted by nearly all but the answers to its mysteries seem to still be hidden.

Personalities: The few detailed personalities in the SPELLJAMMER® setting are found in the books of the Cloakmaster Cycle. The characters could easily be swept up in the search for the Spelljammer but they should be wary. Teldin Moore's companions seldom seem to have very long life-spans. Perhaps they would be better off working for the Elven Navy. However, the Elves seem to have little regard for those not of their race.

However, characters who are careful could serve the Navy as spies pretending to be smugglers or free traders serving both sides of the conflict.

The party could also go about their own business and just have the opportunity to provide occasional aid to either Teldin Moore or the Elves on a temporary basis.

The Mundane: The worst use of the SPELLJAMMER rules would be purely as a mechanism for traveling between campaign worlds. This uses almost none of the potential of these rules and could as easily be accomplished by any number of other expedients.

If used properly, the Spelljammer system can be a whole new experience for your players giving them access to worlds accessible in no other way.

The RAVENLOFT® Setting

This is a whole other dimension instead of a single campaign world. RAVENLOFT® encompasses several different areas within its boundaries. We will just explore the RAVENLOFT setting as a whole.

Flavor: Ravenloft is the Demiplane of Dread, and as such is the epitome of Gothic Horror. A character is never far from terror or death.

The land is ruled by mysterious powers that are never named. These Powers have searched out the most evil creatures that they can find and rewarded them with their own domains (though some say that this is more punishment than reward). Evil rules the lands of Ravenloft and the mists continually search out more evil to gather.

Unfortunately, the mists also gather the good seemingly at a whim. Whether they bring the good there merely to torment them or in an attempt to corrupt them to the ways of evil is not known.

Ravenloft is a land where your fears come alive to haunt your dreams and then return to inflict you with waking nightmares.

To be counted among the righteous is to know that you fight a foe that you can never defeat, only set back in its plans for evil.

Unique Areas: Ravenloft is a diverse plane made up of many domains. These domains are all separate and hail from all worlds and all times, but they share some common traits.

They are all under the control of a dark lord with complete control of the land, its inhabitants, and the walls of mist which surround the domain.

The inhabitants of these lands are all trapped. They can cross from one domain to another if the lord allows passage, but they can never leave the plane of Ravenloft. Few even cross the barriers of mist, for fearsome beasts sometimes lurk there, and who can say that the next realm will be any better? Besides, the mists are poisonous without the potions of the Vistani and they do not sell their potions cheaply or just to anyone.

The mists of Ravenloft reach into all lands to gather victims for the powers that rule there. They are sometimes attracted to great evil and sometimes their choices seem random chance. Whatever their method, once the mists have chosen, they cannot be escaped and there is said to be no release from the Demiplane of Dread.

Characters must be careful of their actions for the Powers notice all and actions with even a hint of darkness about them may attract their notice. They usually choose to reward evil acts but the rewards may not be to the recipient's liking.

Characters in Ravenloft will need to occasionally make fear and horror checks. A failed fear check will often mean running in terror, but a failed horror check may have longer lasting consequences.

Mysteries: The greatest mystery in Ravenloft is the nature of the strange Powers. No one seems to know if they are the actions of a deity or of some quality of the demiplane itself. All anyone knows for sure is that the Powers do exist and take notice of the actions of mortals. They take note of those not mortal as well. The Powers choose Dark Lords to place over their domains and work to protect them from those who would do them harm. Why they choose to do this is yet another mystery.

A mystery nearer to the minds of most in the demiplane is the possibility of escape. Escape is said by some to be impossible, but others talk of secret gates known only to the Vistani or perhaps known to no man. No one knows for sure unless they have explored all of the secrets of Ravenloft and only the Powers can make that claim.

Another mystery which was explored in the original RAVENLOFT® module was the woman that Count Strahd tried to steal from his brother. She is somehow reincarnated in Barovia from time to time and Strahd searches her out. He believes that he can somehow win her love but he only succeeds in continuing the tragedy that began his corruption.

Personalities: The main personalities in the demiplane are the Darklords and they are too numerous to mention here. A party of adventurers will almost certainly come to the attention of one or more of these evil creatures and will almost certainly wish they

hadn't. The lord of a domain is in utter control of the land and of many of the inhabitants. In addition to the powers that this gives them, lords of a domain are usually creatures of great personal power as well. They do not take kindly to any who might pose a threat to them and will move quickly to either eliminate the threat or bring it under their control.

The Mundane: There is very little that is mundane about the RAVENLOFT® setting. However, much of the setting depends on the DM to maintain the tension and fear that Ravenloft engenders in its inhabitants. If you are not careful to do this at all times, the demiplane of dread will soon become just another setting for a campaign. Perhaps a bit more deadly than most but normal other than that.

The DARK SUN™ Setting

Athas is a world unlike TSR's other campaign settings. The whole feel of the world is different, with an extensive set of new rules to handle it.

Flavor: Athas is a deadly world of dark moods and harsh environments. The world of Athas is mostly desert with water a precious commodity. Athas is a metal poor world with little armor (it is too hot to wear heavy armor anyway). Most weapons are made of bone, wood, or obsidian and weapons of metal are considered a sign of great wealth.

Elves on Athas are marauders and thieves, and halflings are savage tribes of cannibals. The cities are ruled by evil, ruthless Sorcerer-Kings who rule with an iron hand. Mages are a despised minority, hated and hunted by all.

All are at the mercy of slavers who sell any that they can catch to the mines or the arenas. The people entertain themselves with gladiatorial combats which pit slaves against horrible monsters or each other in fights to the

death. As someone once said about the middle ages, life on Athas is apt to be brutal, unpleasant, and short.

Unique Areas: The first thing that most people notice about the DARK SUN setting is the Psionics. Everyone on Athas has some form of psionic ability. This ranges from the impressive powers of a true psionist to the random wild talents possessed by most.

There are new races, new character kits, new weapons, new spells, and new non-weapon proficiencies. There are oceans of silt, huge deserts, wild jungles populated by cannibals, and lush protected lands guarded by druids whose very life is joined to the land around them.

Athas is a world with no gods except the vile sorcerer-kings who grant spells to their faithful templars. Clerics, on the other hand, get their spells by worshipping the elements that make up the world around them.

Each player on Athas makes up a character tree of three characters so that if they lose one they will have another to replace it. Athas is such a harsh world that all characters start at third level.

Mysteries: Athas is a world of many mysteries. Why do no gods rule the souls of men? Why on this world and no others are the clerics able to gain spells directly from the elements? How do the Sorcerer-kings grant spells to their followers? Why do the mages of Athas have to power their spells with the life force of the world around them? What prompted the ancient rulers of Athas to attempt to wipe out all non-humans on their world?

Any or all of these questions could form the basis for a series of adventures on Athas. The characters could have to sneak into the palace of their city to access ancient records. They could have to travel the harsh wilderness of Athas to recover lost artifacts which give a clue to the power of the Sorcerer-kings and possibly a method for their defeat.

Personalities: Other than the Sorcerer-kings (who the characters don't want to meet), only main characters to be covered in great detail are the gladiator Rikus, his companions and the ex-templar Tithian who now rules Tyr.

Though the characters can easily come into contact with these people and be engaged by them for various missions, they will most likely end up working for one of the merchant houses as caravan guards or for a Veiled Alliance on some covert operation.

There is also a great deal of room on Athas for the characters to remain completely independent and operate on their own. However, it is very difficult on Athas not to be drawn into one form of intrigue or another.

The Mundane: Very little is mundane on Athas. The environment is so harsh that daily survival will be enough of a struggle to keep the characters busy all of the time.

Almost all rules are changed on Athas in some way. The monsters have different ways of fighting. The environment is not something that can be ignored like in most settings. If you wanted a campaign set on Athas to be commonplace, you would have to work at it. Life on Athas may be unpleasant, but it is never boring.

The GREYHAWK® Setting

Greyhawk is the original campaign setting. This is where it all began. Everything that went into the AD&D® game started here.

Flavor: Greyhawk is the generic AD&D world and it shows. This is not to imply that Greyhawk is boring. The world of Greyhawk is as varied as the AD&D game itself.

At first, there was only the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting. Therefore, when a new idea was born for the AD&D game a new area was placed on the map. This makes the map of Greyhawk an incredibly varied

mixture. Barbarian hordes live next door to high civilizations. Evil dictatorships are only a few leagues from Lawful Good Theocracies. You can find anything you want on the WORLD OF GREYHAWK setting and if you don't go looking for it, it will probably come looking for you. About the only thing you won't find on Greyhawk is a peaceful, boring neighborhood.

Unique Areas: The areas of Greyhawk are a bit difficult to talk about here because of the coming changes mentioned above. However, one of the things that is unusual about Greyhawk was that with its diversity, there was a reasonable explanation for just about any character you wanted to run.

Mysteries: Greyhawk has been around so long that most of the original mysteries have been explored. The "From the Ashes" supplement creates new frontiers for player characters to work on.

Personalities: If you want to know what famous personalities your players might meet on Greyhawk, just look through the *Player's Handbook* or the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide*. Any names on spells or magic items probably started out as characters in the original GREYHAWK campaign. Your players can meet Mordenkainen, Leomund, Bigby or any number of other characters who have become household names in the AD&D® game. A lot of people have a hard time connecting those names with normal characters, and they will certainly be interested in meeting them.

The Mundane: Very little is truly mundane about Greyhawk. Most new players have never campaigned there and will be amazed at the variety. However, some players who have become jaded with new gimmicks and alternate rules might expect Greyhawk to be boring. It is up to you to keep the campaign exciting. There is more than enough material on Greyhawk to keep a campaign fresh for years.

People in the Middle Ages had vastly different attitudes and beliefs than people today. This is something that most gamers overlook when trying to act out a role. DMs often forget this simple fact also, allowing players to interact with the peasants they meet as if they were conversing with people on a street in Chicago or New York. The only time that the populace reacts is when a player mentions an obvious anachronism.

Peasants in a feudal society were very aware of their social station. They would be hesitant at best to speak to a group of obviously wealthy travelers who came riding up in the middle of the day. After all, the peasants were poorly armed if they were armed at all and the warriors riding by might even have mages with them. Common villagers would probably run to inform the village elders or the nearest minor noble that armed strangers were approaching and needed to be dealt with. If the locals were forced to speak to these strange individuals, they would be deferential in the extreme, often not even raising their eyes to meet the stranger's.

Any good reference book on the Middle Ages will show how superstitious the people were. People in those times used superstition and folk-tales to help them explain the world around them. The world was a very frightening place in the Middle Ages because so little about nature and the world in general was really understood. Therefore, the populace peopled the world with strange supernatural creatures to explain away those things they did not understand. Like all our fears, these supernatural beings were assumed to be evil, and just waiting their chance to devour someone or carry him screaming off into the Abyss.

This provided an extra incentive to be wary around strangers. It was bad enough that they might be mercenaries, or bandits, or soldiers of your lord's enemies. Now they might be fiends or warlock come to win your confidence and then to spirit you away into the

darkness never to return.

We have trouble understanding this attitude today. Even the most rational of us might feel a little twinge if a black cat crosses our path, but the people in the Middle Ages *knew* for a fact that black cats were witches' familiars and the servants of evil. They knew this like we know that jumping in front of a speeding bus is not generally a healthy action.

How much more terrifying must daily life be for peasants in an average campaign setting. They don't even have to take witches and warlocks and fiends and werewolves on faith. They have probably seen them first hand.

The average peasant is nearly defenseless in this setting. He might be able to take on a wolf or two but certainly not something that is immune to normal weapons. His only defense is to run at the first sign of trouble and either take cover somewhere safe or get someone who is capable of defending him. If he reacts too soon, he will probably be laughed at and may be punished. If he reacts too slowly, he may die. None of these circumstances make for a particularly brave or friendly peasant population. The picture of the cheerful villagers coming out to greet the party on their arrival is probably more than a little unrealistic.

On the plus side, the average AD&D® game peasant is certainly less likely than his real world counterparts to go on a witch hunt and indulge in Auto-da-fe. The major fallacy of the Middle Age witch hunts was that if the witches were as powerful and evil as the hunters said they were then the peasants who rounded them up would have never been able to handle them. AD&D game peasants have the advantage of having actually seen spell-casters in action. They know what they would be up against if they were stupid enough to try rounding them up and burning them.

Another subject that modern gamers have trouble comprehending is the medieval feel-

ing about religion. We have all read books and seen movies that portrayed medieval peasants as devoutly religious. However, even the truly faithful among us have trouble understanding the intensity of their beliefs.

As well as being a frightening world, the world of medieval Europe (on which most fantasy campaigns base their worlds) was a terrible place to live by today's standards. There was practically no real medical care, most people lived in a condition little better than slavery, infant mortality was staggering, and starvation was a constant fear. Peasants worked from sunup to sundown, seven days a week to raise enough food to barely survive. With no understanding of micro-organisms or sanitation, disease was common and epidemics were frequent. The average life-span was barely half what it is today.

In this brutal, unpleasant existence the only voice offering even a glimpse of hope was the church. If the peasants in the Middle Ages believed they were surrounded by fiends, werewolves, and witches, at least they had the church standing behind them offering hope and protection.

The church could not offer to cure all the ills in the average peasant's life, but they did what they could. The church provided what medical care was available, some charity when times were hard, and sanctuary when there was nowhere else safe to turn. Perhaps the most valuable thing the church offered to the peasants was an intangible. They offered faith in a better existence after death. The church let the peasants know that life was fleeting and that if they had faith, they would soon leave this for a better world.

Try and imagine what this meant to a serf in the Middle Ages. Life was endured under conditions that most of us cannot even imagine (no medical care, rampant disease, famine, children sold into slavery to obtain money to allow the rest of the family to survive), and this was the normal condition for everyone

However, if you just endured and had faith you knew that something better was coming. And the church was your avenue to achieve this better world. Is it any wonder that medieval peasants would flock by the thousands to lay down their lives for a religious principal?

Fantasy campaign worlds operate under somewhat different conditions, of course. On one hand medical care is more available with cure spells and magic potions. Though given the relative numbers of clerics to peasants, the ability to avail oneself of this care is by no means certain. *Cure disease* is a 5th level spell, after all. The down side is, that if there is no magical curing available for you no one has been doing research on mundane medicines. After all, even if magical cures are not always easily available, some of the incentive for research is lost if you know that someone can already cure any disease with a few prayers. Besides, if good temples casting *Cure Disease* can prevent epidemics then what is to prevent the evil temples from casting *Cause Disease* to try and start them. So with magical cures being expensive if available (*Cure Disease* is listed in the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide* as costing 500 gold pieces a shot), disease and injury are still something to fear.

Famine may not be as common. The main reason that famine was so deadly is the lack of decent transportation. Surplus food from an area where harvests were good could almost never be taken where it was needed before it spoiled. Even if it could have been the means of long distance communication were so slow and unreliable that thousands could die before an area with surplus food could learn of the famine, inform the government of the stricken country that food was available for sale, find out if they were interested, make a deal and arrange to send the food. That is even assuming that the country with a surplus is willing to help. After all, they could be the ones short on food next year.

and who will help them then. Besides, if the people of a neighboring country are stricken with famine maybe it would be a good time to invade.

Magical means of communication and transportation can lessen the severity of bad harvests a great deal. Clerics and Druids can also help by controlling the weather and casting spells on the crops. However, with a dozen gods being worshipped in the area one will nearly always be mad enough at somebody to punish the populace. Evil wizards really can blight your crops for spite. And the neighboring lands might just be using magic against your food supply in preparation for attack. Therefore, famine is still a worry.

The fantasy peasant is not guaranteed any better income than his real-life counterparts either. In the real world, the nobility often taxed the peasants to the point of starvation to supply the armies needed for conquest and defense. With magical warfare thrown into the pot, armies are even more expensive and the means of income for a peasant aren't a whole lot more lucrative.

Added to the problems of peasants in the real world are those which exist only in fantasy. Orcs, Goblins, Bugbears, and other evil races of creatures too numerous to mention are always deciding that food and shelter are easier to steal than build. Real dragons and giants can come tromping down main street. A random deity can decide that July is a lovely time for snow and if your crops are frostbitten that's just too bad. And those dratted adventurer types are stirring up the evil spirits in the local dungeon again.

On top of this in an AD&D® world the gods are physically manifesting themselves fairly often. Miracles are a common occurrence, and if healing magic is available it will probably go to the faithful first. Besides, if you live in the Forgotten Realms, eight or nine avatars were more than likely having it out down the road just last week.

In an AD&D campaign world, religion is not a matter for faith. It is a matter for the evening news. Gods are physical entities who are in your face every day. Given the principal that a deity's power rises and falls in direct relation to his number of worshippers, the gods are not about to let the common people just go on about their daily lives without making their presence felt. The struggle to win the faith of the people is a life or death battle for them.

In this situation, peasants in a fantasy world are not likely to be any less devout than those in the real world. Religion is going to be a large part of their daily lives. They will spend a great deal of time and attention to placating the gods and they will be very suspicious of anyone who's presence might offend them. This list might include mages, thieves, and most especially the priests or paladins of another god.

Religious tolerance may be common. After all, why take the chance that a particular deity will be offended because you don't have a shrine to him in your town. On the other hand, why take the chance that a god or goddess will get angry because you allowed someone they find displeasing to take shelter in your barn either? Religion will be a very hot issue in the life of the common man.

In a reasonable fantasy world, peasants will probably spend a part of each day paying homage to some deity. There is a deity in the AD&D system that controls nearly every facet of daily life, and nobody will be able to afford offending any of them. It is unwise to go shopping or sell a pig without at least saying a prayer to some deity or another. The common people will probably always be carrying or wearing the symbol of some deity on their person. Since a person probably can't avoid offending some god no matter how careful he is, maybe the next best solution is to put himself fully under the protection of one deity and hope for the best. After all, it seems to work for

the clerics, doesn't it? Besides, that way a person has only one set of rules to learn, much better than trying to learn them all.

To sum up all of this information, peasants in a fantasy world will probably be a rather suspicious lot. They will be worried about the possible identities or motives of a group of strange adventurers wandering through their village. Adventurers carry a lot of destructive potential with them. On the other hand, given the average income of a peasant (probably less than ten or twelve gold pieces a year, little of that in cash) and the incredible amount of wealth most adventuring parties carry around, they can't afford to just run and hide when a party comes into town. Even a small bit of commerce with adventurers can mean the difference between relative security for the whole family and starvation this winter. So while the townspeople might be a little concerned to see a group of adventurers ride up, they will be happy to deal with them (and hope they move on as soon as possible).

Adventurers can help ameliorate this concern by being pleasant guests. They can cast a spell or two to help out the locals, healing if anyone is ill or injured, *Neutralize Poison* on a tainted well, etc. They could offer to slay a monster that has been taking livestock or endangering travelers. They could even keep weapons peace bonded while in town. (Peace Bonding means tying a cord around the hilt of your weapon and the scabbard so that it must be undone before you can draw it. This leaves weapons available but keeps you from drawing them on impulse and starting a fight you would have avoided if you had stopped and thought). Even things like being good tippers can make the difference between a town being a waystation and a pleasant base of operations. Something for adventurers to think on is that the winter months are a hard time for travel especially in northern climates and it might be nice to have a town where you can weather the bad part of the year.

Another method of endearing yourselves to the locals is to share the news. Even in a fantasy world, peasants often are born, live, and die without ever straying more than a few miles from their hometowns. The only knowledge they have of the outside world is what travelers are willing to tell them. News isn't the only thing adventurers can share either. Tales of their adventures are a glimpse of a world that most peasants will never see. If the group includes a bard to entertain with tales of the group's bravery and daring so much the better. If he mentions the trials endured by the party for righteous causes that probably won't hurt either. Most peasants are farmers or those who sell to farmers. While there is always enough to keep busy with on a farm, the winter months can be a dreary time. With no crops to tend, the long cold days can seem to last forever.

Cabin fever is not a joke in a medieval society. We often get restless if we are ill and confined to our home for a few days. Imagine an entire winter spent in your home with no television, radio, stereo, books, newspaper, or electric lights. Imagine that even if the weather is good, you can't go more than four or five miles from your home and the only entertainment within reach is to go to the inn and sit and have a few drinks with the same thirty or forty people that you see all year round. Besides, you can't really afford to do that very often either. Suddenly, there rides into town a group of strangers. They are laughing and singing and throwing gold around like it was water. One of them is a bard with tales of adventure and conquest. They know that the latest negotiations between the king and the neighboring monarch have extended the peace treaty between your countries. There will be no war in the spring. Don't you think you might be a little glad to see them? As long as the characters are willing to share their news, and don't do anything too offensive, the mere fact that they have knowledge of current

events can guarantee them a welcome in a lot of areas. If they ration their stories and news carefully, a party of adventurers can probably pay for their lodging for a couple of nights on that alone.

Adventurers should also be cognizant of local religions and taboos. They travel more miles in a year than many inhabitants of their worlds do in a lifetime. During their travels they will be exposed to many beliefs. In a world with multiple deities and little communication between regions, minor sects and cults can flourish. The mere fact that a temple in the local area worships a deity whose name is familiar to the group by no means ensures that the religion practiced in that temple will be at all familiar to them. Even a small difference in beliefs can lead the party into trouble if they stumble over a local taboo.

An astute group of adventurers can save themselves a lot of trouble by listening to the gossip about the "barbarians" over the next hill. Given a general fear of strangers, xenophobia is a common condition of most peasant populations. Any difference in customs practiced by a neighboring area will be discussed as proof that the people "over there" are not really as civilized as the people in whichever area you happen to be in at the moment. A party of adventurers who mention what direction they are traveling will likely be the recipients of a plethora of advice and warnings about the strange beliefs and practices of the people they are likely to meet. A party of adventurers who are willing to listen, and able to separate truth from fable, can possibly save themselves a bit of grief and confusion in their travels.

Characters should also remember that in a medieval society, local authorities had inordinate amounts of power. Remember the Sheriff of Nottingham. His power in his locale was nearly absolute. He was responsible only to the king who cared little what his methods were as long as the taxes were collected.

In today's world if a person is suspected of a crime, the crime would be investigated and if there was sufficient evidence he would be arrested and held for trial. In a medieval society this was not always practical. For one thing letting someone walk around free while you investigate a crime is an invitation to escape. With no means of mass communication, once a criminal got fifty or so miles away he might as well be on another continent. There were no scientific investigating tools and actual jails were almost nonexistent outside of large cities.

A suspect was usually put in whatever spot was handy to confine him in and the local lord or magistrate would spend a day or two looking into things (if he just didn't listen to everyone's story and make his decision on the spot). After that he would listen to the evidence and make a judgement. There were usually no professional judges available and the idea that a jury made up of peasants could make a better decision would have been laughable to most people in authority. If the accused was found guilty, a sentence was usually pronounced immediately and often carried out on the spot. Since prisons were a rarity, sentences usually involved fines, flogging, enforced servitude, mutilation, or execution. Penalties were severe with execution not uncommon for relatively minor crimes and severe mutilation for others (i.e. cutting off one's hand for petty theft). Judgements and sentences were often arbitrary. In many medieval societies being accused was just as good as being convicted.

Strangers were at even greater risk. Locals had their reputations going for them or at least someone to stand up for them. Local serfs and farmers also had some value to the lords since they paid taxes. Strangers usually don't pay taxes and might have valuable property that would of course be forfeit to the local lord after their execution or sale into slavery. If you think speed traps in small towns do a lucra-



tive business just think of the profit in trapping adventurers. The added benefit is that is no one is probably ever going to come looking for them.

Adventure Possibilities

Quite a few adventures can be based on the things mentioned in the preceding pages. Given the mistrust of strangers and the rather strange customs that were fostered by the isolation of medieval communities, there are innumerable ways for an adventuring group to fall afoul of the local authorities. These can be used to fill in the time traveling between major adventures or could be expanded to be full-scale scenarios in their right. Some of the following ideas can also make excellent lead-ins to another adventure. The exact scale of an adventure is, of course up to the needs of your campaign.

Religious Taboos: As stated before with a multitude of religions and relative isolation, a religion that the party feels that they are familiar with can develop some interesting local quirks that can cause problems for strangers.

Suppose that horses are sacred to a local agricultural or sylvan deity. On the holy days of that god it is forbidden to ride horses at the risk of incurring the god's wrath. According to local beliefs, disobeying this rule will cause famine for the whole area for years to come. The locals all know this and obey the restriction and for years the harvests have been good and everyone is happy.

The party just happens to enter town on a holy day and they are riding their horses like usual. The characters might not know that anything is wrong at first. Eventually though, the horrified looks from passersby and the shocked and angry crowds gathering in the street should get their attention.

If the party is obviously powerful, the villagers might not be willing to take them on

right away. Sooner or later though they will get their chance. The villagers will probably want to take the party alive so that they can be taken to the temple. There, the local priest will commune with the deity and decide how to handle the situation. If you just want to make this a short interlude during a trip to somewhere else the penalties can be minor. The party must swear an oath not to ride their horses for one month, or they must make some offering to the temple in contrition. If you are looking for something more substantial, the party could have to undertake a quest or even end up scheduled to be sacrificed.

The real rub here is that, unlike a problem in a medieval village in the real world, the taboo and the dangers involved in breaking it are very likely real. The party could be responsible for condemning the villagers to famine. Any good aligned party should be willing to make amends in any way available. (Though allowing oneself to be sacrificed is a bit extreme.)

Another possible consequence of breaking religious rules is that of becoming "unclean." Like untouchables in India, the party might break some sort of taboo (touching a corpse, eating forbidden foods, even dressing in the wrong colors) that renders them unfit to be associated with by the faithful. If they are just passing through the town, this is a minor annoyance. If they are in need of healing or supplies or if they are to wait in the town to meet someone the problem becomes more serious. If they are in the area to obtain information from a local who is of the faithful, the problem becomes serious indeed.

The party might have to come up with ways to deal with the locals without direct contact. Or they may have to find a way to undergo a ritual cleansing so that they are once again acceptable. It might be a bit difficult to accomplish the cleansing, especially if they can't speak to any of the locals to find out how they are to go about being cleansed.

This may be a dated reference, but the concept of the man in charge of the Skunk Works in Li'l Abner comes to mind.

Other religious taboos might not bring disaster down upon the populace or make the party unfit for society. Some infractions may just be seen to be offensive by the faithful and anger those from whom the party needs information or aid. The party might have to spend some time collecting information on a local dignitary or sage in order to determine how to get back in his or her good graces.

The End of the World

One of the things that happened more often in medieval societies than modern ones was great segments of the local populace taking some strange occurrence as a sign of great disaster or the end of the world. These things still occur occasionally but not as often.

Suppose the party rides into a village to find they populace busily destroying everything that they own. Most adventurers would be somewhat curious at this sort of display. Upon inquiry, they are told that a local holy man has interpreted some strange occurrence as a sign from the gods that the world is coming to an end and they are to show their worthiness by relieving themselves of all worldly possessions.

This might worry most adventurers unduly, though the thought of all these people doomed to starvation when the expected catastrophe does not occur should cause a twinge or two. However, suppose that the party has traveled here specifically to obtain information from a local library that the peasants are on the verge of destroying in their fervor to "cleanse" themselves. Alternately, the party might wish to consult with a local sage who now is busy divesting himself of worldly goods and has no time to deal with their questions. After all, what difference will their questions make in a few days.

The party might attempt to contact the holy man and convince him that his vision was wrong. However, holy men are notoriously stubborn about divine revelations. The holy man might only be willing to believe another sign that shows that the gods have relented in their decision to punish men for their evil ways.

This could convince a party to "arrange" an omen for the seer. The only complication might be that the holy man refuses to expound on just what a favorable omen might be. Some research (at the library that is going to be burned), or a really successful check on the religion nonweapon proficiency might give the party this information. Then all the adventurers would have to do is arrange for the omen, make sure that the holy man is where he is sure to see it and hope that he interprets it the way they want him to.

If they don't manage to find out what a good omen would be, they will just have to make their best guess. They could base this on what the bad omen was and try to counteract it. This could quickly turn into a comedy of errors as the party tries one omen after another to find the right combination while simultaneously trying to stall the villagers from destroying their food supplies or the resources that the party came to make use of.

Another way the locals might be dealing with the news of their impending doom is to go on a spree of violence and debauchery. With the world ending anyway they may as well spend their remaining time having fun. They might be drinking, carousing, or wandering around with weapons looking to settle old scores before it is too late. In this situation the party may have to become a peacekeeping force. They may be able to find some of the local authorities who are trying to keep things as much under control as possible until a solution can be found. In fact, they may be drafted into the local constabulary for the duration of the emergency. This could be

especially troublesome if they have an appointment to keep elsewhere.

The local populace might also just fall into a state of depression over the news of the coming cataclysm. The party might ride into town and find the streets deserted. Upon investigation, they might find everyone at home just waiting for the end. Why work or go out if the world is ending anyway?

Placing the Party at Odds With Society

As well as running afoul of religious beliefs, the party can find trouble in other ways. They can also be condemned by the local legal system or customs. There is no end of ways in which a good DM can cause grief for his players.

Old Enemies: We have already discussed the reliance of medieval communities on news brought by travelers and the power of local authorities. These things can cause trouble for a group of adventurers either separately or in combination.

Suppose the party manages to annoy a traveling bard. Perhaps they were not attentive enough at one of his performances or refused to let him travel along with them to report their deeds. The party might not even know that they have offended the bard in question. Perhaps a young lady that the bard had his eye on has been flirting with a character, or even a lady that a friend of the bard was involved with.

The bard could make it his business to travel the countryside singing songs that tell of cowardly or evil acts by the characters. Whether the tales are true or not, an accomplished bard could in a single season make the characters infamous for hundreds of miles in any direction. After all, other bards listen to performances and pick up especially well crafted songs to add to their own repertoire. If the bard sings in a few spots where other bards are common the tale could spread faster

than the party could travel. Before long, the party could find that as soon as they mention their names, they are suddenly unwelcome in areas that they have never previously visited.

Another complication caused by the spreading of song among different bards is that it may be nearly impossible to track down the person responsible for slandering the party. Even if the party is lucky enough to find the original culprit, they still have to make amends or find some way to convince him to stop spreading his stories. Supposing they manage this, they will still have bards all over the countryside singing the false songs.

One possible solution is to have a bard of their own start spreading tales of their goodness and bravery to counteract the false tales. Of course if the original bard is angry because the party refused to allow him to travel with them, he would be happy to perform this service. How effective the counter-propaganda would be is for the DM to decide. It would depend in part on how good the original songs were and if the new ones were better. Of course, the party could always change their names and appearances and set sail for distant lands where they are not so well known.

Another plot device in the same vein would be to have someone ride into a town a day or two ahead of the characters and warn the villagers that a band of vicious killers is on their way giving the characters' descriptions. This is a little more serious since the townspeople might very well decide to set a trap for the party and ambush them. This could end with several party members dead or captured or with the party slaughtering a group of peasants whose only crime is to try and defend their homes. A situation like this should be reserved for part of a larger plot such as the party being in pursuit of one of the campaign's major villains who uses this ruse to gain time to escape.

An enemy of the characters could also use the local authorities against the party. By

planting false information on a gullible magistrate or bribing a corrupt one, he could have the party declared outlaws. A reward might even be put on their heads. The party might have to find evidence that they are not criminals or flee for their lives. They could appeal to a higher authority but unless they are known at the court of a higher noble, they must still find sufficient evidence to clear their names. After a period of time their status as outlaws could become known in neighboring realms and even if they could clear their names and have the reward removed, they would have to be careful traveling into areas where the news of their acquittal had not reached. It would be a real shame to have another group of adventurers collect the party's heads only to find that there is no longer a reward.

One danger in a situation like this is that the party may have to commit a real crime in order to protect themselves from the false charges. Suppose they were set upon by what they thought were a group of brigands and defeated them, only to find that they have slain a unit of the king's men who were trying to arrest some outlaws. Until the false accusations could be cleared up, the party would have to walk a fine line to defend themselves and not take any innocent lives. Governments are notoriously unreasonable about listening to reason when you have just slain a unit of guardsmen.

Righting Wrongs: This is a way that the party can get themselves in deep trouble that takes advantage of the differences between laws in a medieval society and laws today. As was stated before, petty officials often had inordinate judicial authority. A minor noble might have the right of high justice. This means that he could see a crime, apprehend the felon, pass judgement, decide on sentence, and carry out the sentence all on his own and be perfectly within his rights. Since some laws that had severe penalties attached

to them don't even make sense to us in today's society, the party could see what they felt was a random act of brutality and step in only to find out too late that they were interfering with the king's justice and that they are now legally outlaws.

This is similar to the situation of Robin Hood. He was a noble who reacted to an incident of injustice and, since he had acted outside the law, was declared an outlaw. He lost his title and his lands were forfeit to the crown. In the story of Robin Hood, the true king was being held in a foreign land and a petty tyrant was on the throne. Since it was one of the tyrant's cronies that Robin interfered with, when Richard returned to England he was nice enough to grant Robin amnesty and restore his title and lands. The characters will probably not be as lucky.

This plot line should be used when you want to set the background for a long series of adventures. The party could decide to take the route that Robin Hood chose. They could gather a group of outlaws in a similar situation and fight against the unjust laws of the land.

To do this, they will need a base of operations. They will have to find either a place the royal troops can't find (like the hole in the wall of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid), or a place that the troops can't ferret them out of once they are inside (like Sherwood Forest).

They will also need at least the passive cooperation of the peasantry. Without at least some help from the common people, they cannot hope to obtain the supplies or information they need to make a guerilla operation like this work.

Alternately, if the party has been of service to the crown in the past, they could try to appeal their case to the king himself. Unfortunately, royalty has a notoriously short memory when it comes to owing favors and the king may not be interested. Even if this does work, the party has to get to see the king. As

condemned outlaws they might find this difficult to do. It is often not possible to just walk up to the palace and trot on up to the king's bedroom to discuss things with him over breakfast. Assuming that the party can elude capture long enough to go where the king is, they will have to make their way to a spot where they can confront him face to face without being shot as possible assassins. Then they have to talk darn fast to convince him of their case before they are dragged away by the guards. Ideally, they should do all of this before the people who declared them to be outlaws get there first and poison the king's mind against them.

As mentioned above, this should only be used as the background for a whole campaign. The preparation on your part and the degree of involvement for the players are much too extensive for use as a one or two session adventure.

Turning the People Against the Party: Instead of turning the law against the party you can put them in a position where the populace is hostile to adventurers as a whole. There are a couple of ways to accomplish this. If you want the people to express a mild hostility for the party the you can set it up as a local prejudice. After all, the peasants work twelve to sixteen hours a day for subsistence. Adventurers endure some hardships, but they work for a couple of days or a week killing monsters and then ride home with more money than the majority of the population will see in their whole lives. Then, instead of saving it and settling down like decent folk, they squander it like it was worthless on carousing and gambling and go out again for more. It would not take a huge leap of the imagination for the locals to begin resenting this. Especially if the party has not been particularly careful to make themselves popular with the common folk. This resentment would not take the form of violence. It would be more likely to manifest itself in things like

stores always being out of whatever the party wants to buy, or inns and stables being full when the party is looking for lodgings for themselves and their mounts. Perhaps the local bowyer or blacksmith are busy with a large order when the party needs some work done in a hurry. This type of thing is mainly of nuisance value and traditionally culminates in the local people suddenly needing the party's help desperately. The party goes ahead and helps them even after the shoddy treatment and are suddenly heroes again. At least they are for a while. The common people have short memories, too.

Another motive for this type of scenario is more serious and likely to erupt in violence. In this case, another band of adventurers was around in the recent past. They attacked a nearby nest of monsters that had never been much of a problem before and failed to wipe them out. After the previous group got healed up and left with their treasure, the monsters finished licking their wounds and came to town looking for revenge. Several townspeople may have been killed in the attack or some of the local young people may have decided to end the nest of monsters once and for all and gone out never to return.

In a case like this the town's hostility will not be at all subtle. The populace will be openly hostile and even resort to violence if the party does not take the hint and leave town in fairly short order. The townspeople blame the first adventurers for the deaths and have no intention of letting it happen again. They don't want the party stirring up the local monsters and then just moving on. They may also be afraid that more of their children will decide that life as an adventurer is more glamorous than being a farmer and go to their deaths.

There is little that the party can do in a case like this except move on. If there is just one group of monsters to face, they could go in and finish the job that the other group started

They will have to accomplish this in secret however. If the townspeople are informed of their intentions, they will fear more reprisals should the party fail. In this case, the peasants will almost certainly react with violence if the party perseveres in their plans. Attacking the monsters is even better if the children who went to attack them are still alive and might be rescued. Though if any of the children are killed when the party attacks the monsters, the town will certainly rise up against them for revenge.

Another way to handle the idea of a hostile populace is that of a prejudice against a certain character class. Suppose an evil wizard or group of wizards caused great destruction and killing in the area many years ago. The locals may have passed laws against the practice of magic and the general populace may despise all wizards as evil. The very practice of magic use may be punishable by death.

This is somewhat like the situation on Athas, the world of the DARK SUN® Setting. Wizards on Athas caused the destruction of the ecosystem in a series of huge wars. The populace mostly believe that wizards are inherently destructive and evil. They have no understanding of Preserver mages. In a similar manner the people of the land in question have forgotten that there can be such a thing as a benign magic-user. Since they were harmed by mages who were evil, they have come to equate magic with evil.

Mark Twain said that people should be smarter than cats. If a cat sits on a hot stove lid, she will never sit on another. However she will never sit on a cold one either. The peasants in this scenario are like the cat. Having been harmed by an evil mage, they will never trust a good one either.

A magic using character coming into this area could be in for quite a shock. Especially if he was not aware of the prohibition on magic in advance. There are several interesting plot devices that you could introduce. Perhaps as

on Athas, there is an underground organization that trains and protects mages. If the mage character is unaware of the law they could contact him before he gives himself away or rescue him afterwards. The underground could provide means of obtaining spell components and materials. They could also hide mages who have become well-known or even spirit them out of the country to more tolerant lands. The organization might also be able to teach the nonweapon proficiency of somatic concealment so that mages could cast spells without automatically giving themselves away.

A mage character could also be in this land to contact the underground organization and offer them aid. Perhaps a foreign government or group of mages from another land wishes to overthrow the government or educate the populace so that magic use might be allowable again. In this case the other characters could be there to guard the mage or they could all be sent in as a unit of agents to carry out some sort of covert operation.

A similar scenario could be designed in which Thieves or Clerics are outlawed and hunted. The adventure would work much the same in either case. An interesting variation could be for the party to stumble on a land where the people have given up violence and want to take the characters into custody to "cure" them of their antisocial tendencies. This could be somewhat amusing as the party tries to avoid the non-violent means of capture while trying to return to their own lands. It would, of course, be very wrong for a good aligned party to use deadly force against people who have no intention to harm them.

The party could find themselves at a distinct disadvantage since most adventurers don't spend much time or effort learning methods for not hurting people.

Mistaken Identity: This plot line has several interesting and amusing possibilities. The whole party or one of the characters find

themselves mistaken for someone else. This other person can be an outlaw or a hero. The possibilities are varied in either case.

If the character is mistaken for a local hero, the plot could develop several ways. One is for the character to keep protesting his true identity until he just gets tired of trying and lets people believe what they will. There are several ways of using this to frustrate your players as they try to explain the situation to the locals who will smile and nod and then respond with a wink and something along the lines of, "That's fine Conan, if you want to call yourself Fred I'm sure you got your reasons. No one will hear any different from me." The real hero then returns and demands to fight a duel with the coward who has stolen his name. At this point the populace either realizes their mistake and becomes angry at the character for leading them on or refuses to believe that the real hero is who he says he is and accuses him of being the imposter. This, of course will only make the real hero more determined than ever to wipe out this stain on his honor.

The party then must either appease the hero or find some way for the character to survive the duel. (The hero is of course much more powerful than anyone in the party) The character could throw the fight by taking a fall and playing dead, perhaps by using a *feign death* spell. However this is prone to backfire if the real hero is one who is prone to taking trophies from his victims. The real hero could also decide to honor the character for his bravery in the duel by building a pyre and giving him a hero's funeral. Either of the developments will call for some quick action on the part of the group.

Secondly, instead of the hero returning, one of his old enemies could show up, anxious to have it out with his old nemesis once and for all. This works similarly to the previous scenario, except that there is almost no chance of appeasing the villain. He will be satisfied

with nothing less than the character's head for his wall. The classic ending for this situation is for the hero to arrive at the last minute and trade places with the character, and soundly defeat the villain in an epic battle. If you would like, this can then turn into the first situation as after the battle, the hero asks just why the character was impersonating him in the first place.

The third possibility is for the local populace to suddenly be threatened by a horrendous monster. Coincidentally, the hero that the character resembles is famous for killing the same sort of creature several years ago in a famous battle (that the characters have never heard about). This is a little safer than the other scenarios as the rest of the party can at least help the character in question. If they wish, they can even stage a death scene for the hero and disguise their friend, getting him out of a bad situation.

Being mistaken for a hero can be dangerous, but at least people treat you with respect. The characters could be mistaken for a notorious band of outlaws. Not only do people not offer to buy drinks for the bad guys, there is usually a price on their heads.

Though the situations are similar, the complications are different. In this case the party needs to prove who they are a bit more desperately.

Not only will bounty hunters be after them, but the authorities will be trying to arrest them for other people's crimes. Besides, villains have enemies too. When you are mistaken for a hero, the people trying to kill you are at least villains. When the locals think that you are the villains, the people coming to hunt you down are generally the good guys. Most characters consider it bad form to kill other heroes, even in self defense.

The best way to clear up a misunderstanding like this one is to find the real villains and bring them in for trial. This is not easy at the best of times, and it can be a real killer when

you're trying to do that and dodge the law besides. However, it can be done. For ideas on ways to drive your players nuts with this situation, you might want to catch an old series called "Alias Smith and Jones;" it still runs on syndication in some areas. The situation is not exactly the same. However, the problems of trying to not break any laws and stay out of jail at the same time while you are being hunted by the authorities are very well played out

Sometimes the problems of mistaken identities are not as deadly but just as embarrassing. Suppose, your players have their characters stop in a town and before they have even dismounted, a lovely young woman throws herself at one of them kissing him and telling him over and over how happy she is that he has returned. The character, of course has never seen the woman before in his life. The character in question looks just like the girl's lover who left over a year ago looking for his fortune so that they could marry. When the character tries to set the young woman straight, she either becomes extremely worried and asks the others how long ago he lost his memory, or begins to cry and begs him not to be so cruel. If he doesn't love her any more he should just tell her, not pretend he doesn't know her.

This can be amusing or sad depending on how you want to play it. The real lover can return, causing the girl to reward the character with a slap and accusing him of leading her on, or the party can ride out leaving a heartbroken woman behind them certain that her lost love has been devoured by beasts.

If you want this to last for a while, the young woman can finally become convinced that the character is not her love and beg the party to search for him. This could lead to any adventures you wish, but in the interest of heroic fantasy it should end with the lovers being reunited. Real heroism requires that love conquer in the end

How to Unpick a Pocket: This is a fairly

simple plot device that can be run in any town. As the party is walking along, a young man runs headlong into one of them. He picks himself up, and without even an apology continues on as fast as he can.

The young man is a thief and is running from the watch. During the collision, he planted the stolen goods on the character he collided with. It doesn't really matter what he stole as long as it is something small and extremely valuable.

From here, the encounter can run one of two ways. In the first case, the watch can come around the corner just after the thief gets out of sight and arrest the party. They find the stolen goods on the character and a long series of very unpleasant questions begin. If you want this to run short, the authorities are eventually convinced of the party's innocence and they are released. If you are looking for something a bit more elaborate, the party might have to escape and find the real thief to prove their innocence.

The second situation is a little longer lasting. The watch comes around the corner and apprehends the real thief. They take him in and question him. Since he is no longer carrying the merchandise, they have no evidence and release him. He then has to figure out how to recover the stolen goods from the party.

By that time, the party has probably discovered that they have something they did not start out the day with. However, it is sometimes more amusing if they don't realize they have it until the end of the adventure. As they take care of their business in town numerous attempts are made to steal back the item. If your players are like most, the more blatant the attempts to rob them, the more determined they will be to figure things out themselves. Simply taking the item to the authorities and telling them what happened will be the last thing to enter their minds. However, if they do turn the item in, the thief can always kidnap someone they know or

steal something they value and offer them a fair trade. All they have to do is get his merchandise back from the police. Because this scenario is so flexible, it is perfect for slipping into a campaign at the spur of the moment. You can use it to liven up a scenario that is moving slowly or just to fill in some night when the players finish earlier than you expected and you don't have their next destination planned.

Monsters Where the Players Aren't Looking: This idea has occurred in various forms in a couple of horror movies and an episode or two of "Night Gallery." It also appeared in an excellent tournament run by the RPGA® Network called Hour of the Knife. Players usually expect that while their characters are in town, they are fairly safe. After all, the monsters all live in the wilderness. Right?

Not always. The basic concept here is for the villagers to look human (or Elven or whatever), but for them to really be something else. The "something else" can be any shape changing creatures. Doppelgangers and Lycanthropes come to mind. Both of these creatures work well as they are both intelligent enough to work together and can easily mimic human behavior well enough to fool people. There are certainly other possibilities. Djinn come to mind and one of the "Night Gallery" episodes used a type of ghoul. They were a little different than the average AD&D® game ghoul, they looked like humans during the day and only showed their true nature at night. It seemed that they could also interbreed with humans as one of the characters mentioned being a half-breed.

Doppelgangers can be an interesting choice as they can be used for an "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" type of scenario as one by one the townspeople are taken and replaced. You can even have party members replaced if they let themselves become separated. If your players are good enough roleplayers, you can let them continue playing their characters

after they are replaced. Just take them aside and tell them what has happened. This is how Hour of the Knife worked and the players seemed to have a really good time.

The village of lycanthropes is a good concept too. It is especially fun if your characters use the village for a base of operations for a period of time. They could remain unaware indefinitely as long as they aren't around during the full moon. This could work really well if the party has been hired to take care of a rash of lycanthrope attacks in the region.

During the full moons they would be out hunting and the rest of the time, they could be in the village resupplying and discussing the hunt with the villagers. Who are, of course, laughing behind their backs and listening intently to the party's plans on where to hunt next month. The werereatures could let this drag out for several months before growing tired of the game and staging an attack on the party. Hopefully, the party would get tired of the lycanthropes always striking where they aren't watching and become a bit suspicious. They might even think that someone in town is a lycanthrope or working with them. However, it is unlikely that they would realize the whole village is composed of lycanthropes.

A village of Djinn would be another thing entirely. It is unlikely that it would be a permanent settlement. It might be constructed to aid a party who were lost in the desert and dying of thirst. It might be used by the Djinn to get the party to take on a job for them without letting the characters know who they are. Or, it might be part of an elaborate contest or game between some bored Djinn Nobles who wanted to see just how easily fooled the characters are. It could even be a test of the party to see if they are honest enough or intelligent enough to serve the Djinn's purposes.

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Every player knows that it is really easy to be the perfect Dungeon Master. It couldn't be as hard as people act like it is.

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Being the perfect Dungeon Master is easy. All you need is the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, the stamina of Hercules, and the serenity of Mother Theresa. You just

have to memorize every new product for every campaign setting and every new rules supplement as soon as it comes out and keep up with everything published in every gaming magazine. You just have to agree with every request from your players and still maintain game balance. You just have to make sure that whichever player you are talking to at the moment gets treated like your favorite and still be fair and impartial.

We all know that the stuff above is what the players like to believe but the secret to being a good DM is to enjoy what you do. If you have fun, the players usually will too. Having fun is what helps you maintain your sense of balance when things get crazy. The first sign that you need a break for a while is when you realize that you're not having a good time. So remember, being a good DM is easy and if you're not having fun you're doing something wrong.



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